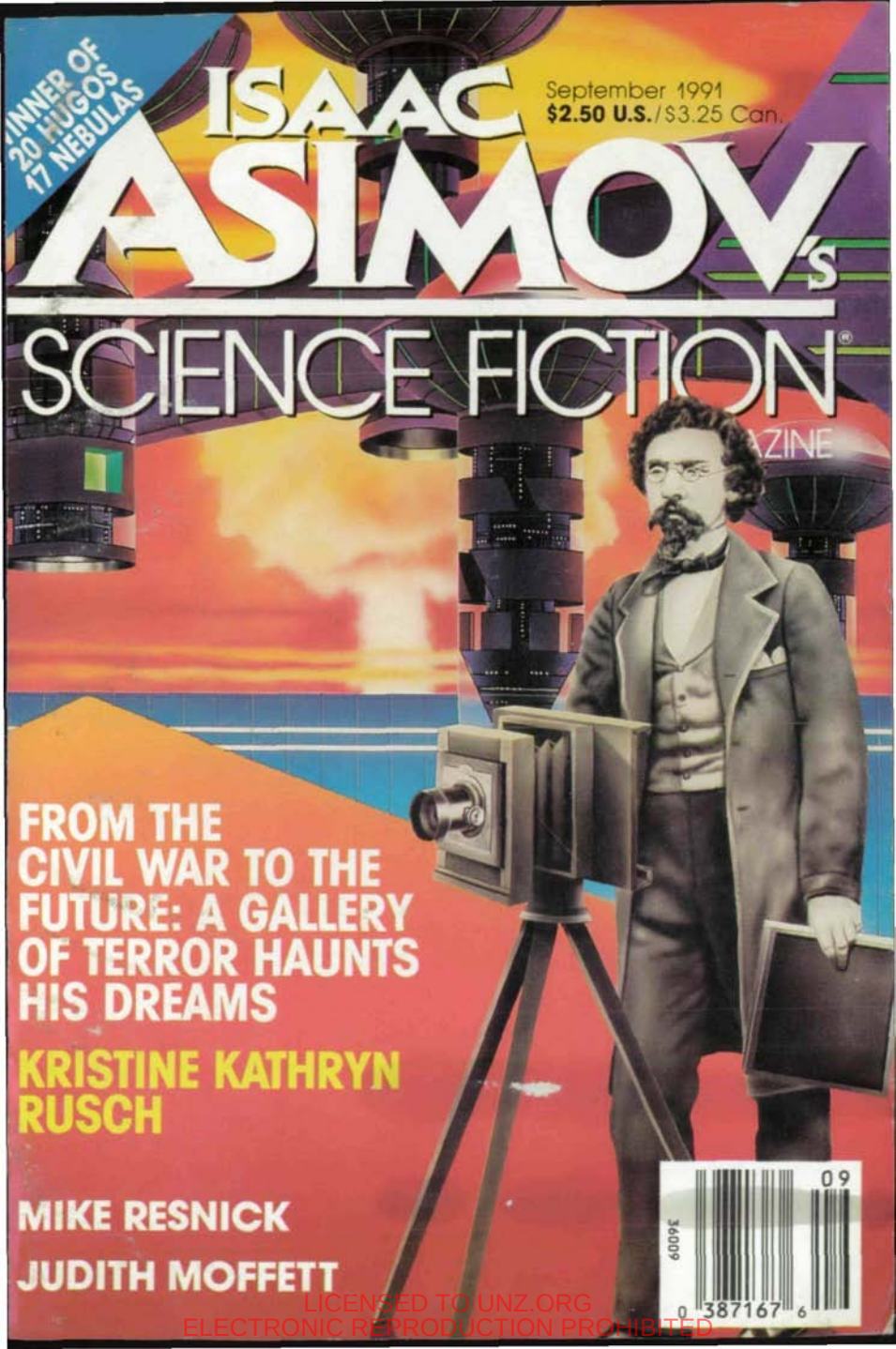
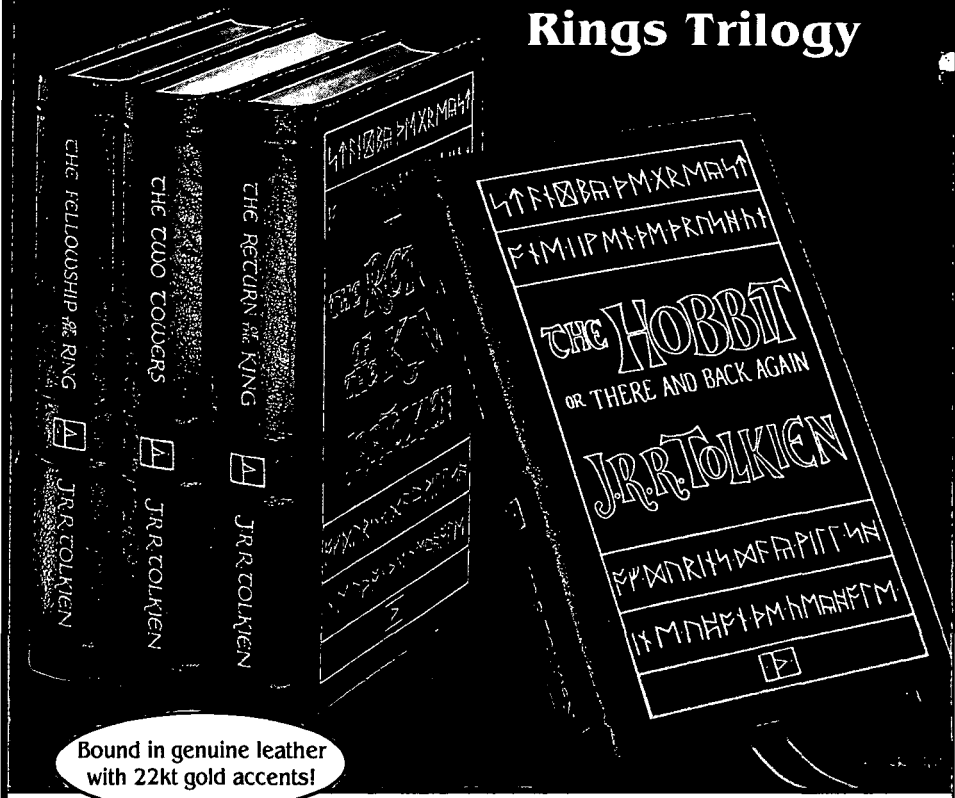


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Own the only leather and gold edition of...

J.R.R. Tolkien's

The Hobbit & The Lord of the Rings Trilogy



Bound in genuine leather with 22kt gold accents!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here are examples of the magnificent illustrations you will find in these deluxe editions.

In four epic volumes, masterful storyteller J.R.R. Tolkien created the magical Third Age of Middle-earth – where tiny creatures, called Hobbits, journey the forests and mountains in a daring odyssey to save their world. These beloved classics – *The Hobbit* and the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy of *The Two Towers, The Fellowship of the Ring,* and *The Return of the King* are superb fantasy-adventures. Now, you can acquire all four of these famous works in a stunning leather-bound set!

Bound in genuine leather, accented with 22kt gold.

These beautiful volumes are meticulously bound in rich, genuine leather and printed on acid-neutral paper to last for generations. The traditional hubbed spines glimmer with real 22kt gold. Front and back covers gleam with deeply inlaid golden designs. Pages are gilded on all three sides. Each volume features a spectacular full-color frontispiece by acclaimed fantasy illustrator, Michael Hague. And *The Hobbit* is illustrated by Tolkien himself!

Limited availability – order now.

Each volume is attractively priced at only $39.50, and your satisfaction is guaranteed. Previous printings of this luxurious edition have all sold out quickly. Don't risk disappointment, mail the Reservation Application *today*!

The Easton Press

47 Richards Avenue • Norwalk, Conn. 06857

RESERVATION APPLICATION

The Hobbit & The Lord of the Rings Trilogy

The Easton Press
47 Richards Avenue
Norwalk, Conn. 06857

Please mail promptly.

Please accept my reservation for the four-volume set – *The Hobbit* • *The Two Towers* • *The Fellowship of the Ring* • *The Return of the King*. I understand that if not delighted, I may return my set within 30 days of receipt for a full refund.

Please send me _____ four-volume set(s).
Qty.

☐ For each four-volume set ordered, charge four monthly installments of $41* to my credit card, beginning at time of shipment.

☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA ☐ Discover ☐ Amer. Express

_____

Credit Card Number Expiration Date

Signature _____
(All orders subject to acceptance.)

Name _____
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ I prefer to pay by check. Enclosed is a deposit of $41* for each four-volume set. Bill me for the remaining three monthly installments.

*Includes $1.50 shipping and handling per volume. Any applicable sales tax will be billed with shipment. Please allow 4-8 weeks for shipment.

193-1005

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION® MAGAZINE

Vol. 15 No. 10 (Whole Number 175)
September 1991
Next issue on sale
August 20, 1991

Novella

130 The Gallery of His Dreams — Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Novelettes

16 Over There — Mike Resnick
44 The Bee Man — Mary Rosenblum
64 Chickasaw Slave — Judith Moffett
98 The Last Dance — Bernard Deitchman

Short Stories

86 Fidelity — Greg Egan
122 River — Kit Reed

Departments

4 Editorial: Nightfall — Isaac Asimov
9 Letters
169 On Books — Baird Searles
177 The SF Conventional Calendar — Erwin S. Strauss

Poem by Sandra Lindow

Cover art for "The Gallery of His Dreams" by Broeck Steadman

Isaac Asimov: Editorial Director
Joel Davis: President **Gardner Dozois:** Editor
Sheila Williams: Managing Editor
A. Bruce Chatterton: Publisher **Terri Czeczko:** Art Director

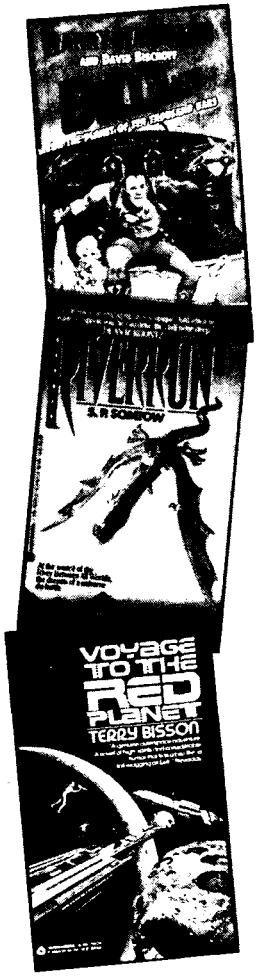
Stories from *IAsfm* have won fourteen Hugos and seventeen Nebula awards, and our editors have received six Hugo awards for Best Editor. *IAsfm* was also the 1990 recipient of the *Locus* Award for Best Magazine.

Published every 28 days which includes special issues in April and November by Davis Publications, Inc. at $2.50 per copy ($3.25 per copy in Canada). One year subscription $34.95 in the United States and U.S. possessions. In all other countries $40.50, (GST included in Canada) payable in advance in U.S. funds. Address for subscriptions and all other correspondence about them, P.O. Box 7058, Red Oak, Iowa 51566. For back issues send $3.50 to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462. Address for all editorial matters: Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY 10168-0035. Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine® is the registered trademark of Davis Publications, Inc. © 1991 by Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10168-0035. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A. Protection secured under the Universal and Pan American Copyright Conventions. Reproduction or use of editorial or pictorial content in any manner without express permission is prohibited. All submissions must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope; the publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Second class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario. POSTMASTER, send change of address to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, Box 7058, Red Oak, Iowa 51566. In Canada return to 1801 South Cameron, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3E1. ISSN 1055-2146. GST #R12393128

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AVON BOOKS

THE FINEST IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY



BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO #5:
On The Planet of Ten Thousand Bars
Harry Harrison and David Bischoff

Harry Harrison, the bestselling author of *West of Eden* and *The Stainless Steel Rat*, teams up with David Bischoff, author of *War Games*, to send Bill, the Galactic Hero, through time, space and sobriety.

Will Bill survive the assassin hippies? Will he swallow the foaming lies of Barworld's existence? Will he ever discover the meaning of life? Find out—*On The Planet of Ten Thousand Bars*!

*With a bonus portfolio of combat sketches by acclaimed illustrator Mark Pacella

RIVERRUN
S.P. Somtow

At the source of the River Between All Worlds, the dreams of a universe do battle.

"It is easy to predict great things for so accomplished and talented a writer as this." —*The Washington Post*

"One of the most gifted masters of color and spectacle of this century—Somtow is no less than that!" —Theodore Sturgeon

VOYAGE TO THE RED PLANET
Terry Bisson

From the highly acclaimed, Nebula Award-winning author of *Talking Man* and *Fire On The Mountain*, comes a riveting adventure novel of a future space voyage, hailed as "a wonderful story" by the *Los Angeles Times*.

"Funny, inventive and smart, the best kind of science fiction adventure."
—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Fresh, imaginative....It is the Bissons of the field upon whom the future of science fiction depends." —*The Washington Post*

Coming in September 1991

AVON BOOKS
The Hearst Corporation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORIAL

by Isaac Asimov

NIGHTFALL

At the time this editorial appears I will be celebrating the golden anniversary of my story, "Nightfall," which saw its first publication in the September 1941 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*.

It all began on March 17, 1941, when I arrived at the offices of John W. Campbell, Jr., the legendary editor of that magazine, for what was then a monthly visit to discuss stories. I was twenty-one years old, and John was thirty. (How young we were in those days!) I had by that time written thirty-one stories, of which I had sold fifteen. I had sold four of them to Campbell, including two of my first three robot stories.

This time, when I walked in, Campbell presented me with a quotation from an essay entitled "Nature" that had been written by Ralph Waldo Emerson. It went as follows:

"If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore, and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God!"

Campbell said, "I think Emerson was wrong. I think if people saw stars only once in a thousand years, they would go mad. What's more, I want you to go home and write a story about that."

The next day I drew a deep breath, put a sheet of paper into my typewriter, typed up the Emerson quotation and began: "Aton 77, director of Saro University, thrust out a belligerent lower lip—" By April 18, the story, which I called "Nightfall" was completed, all 13,300 words of it. I brought it to Campbell, and on April 24, 1941, I received a check for $166.00.

That check placed me in a quandary at once. Campbell was paying one cent a word at the time, and so I should have received 133 dollars. I was desperate for money at the time for I was working my way through Columbia and the additional 33 dollars was important to me. I spent about thirty seconds trying to persuade myself I was in desperate need so that I should take the money and run, but "desperate need" was not enough.

I phoned Campbell, said he had accidentally paid me too much and asked if he would send me a check for the correct amount if I returned the check with the overpayment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Campbell laughed with delight.

"Asimov," he said, "that extra 33 dollars was a bonus because the story turned out far better than I expected it to."

That was my first indication I had done something unusual, for I had written the story exactly as I had written my first thirty-one (most of them stinkers); that is, as fast as I could and without looking back.

I think Campbell dined out on the story for months, too, telling everyone with delight about the naïve young author who thought he was overpaid and tried to hand back the check. That must have roused Campbell's paternal feelings for thereafter he spent more time with me and gave me more attention than he gave anyone else in his growing stable of authors.

The story appeared, as I said, in the September 1941 issue and received the cover. My name was the only one that glowed on that cover, too.

But that was all I could expect. In those days, there was no Analytical Laboratory, no Hugos, no Nebulas. (Not that it mattered, for Robert Heinlein was publishing his first great stories and would have swept the board, in any case, if all those "honor devices" had existed.) Nevertheless, I had no way of knowing I had written a classic. Nor did it dawn on me that I had done so for years.

Yet things began to happen, even though I could not have noticed it at the time, and "Nightfall"

ISAAC ASIMOV:
Editorial Director
GARDNER DOZOIS:
Editor
SHEILA WILLIAMS:
Managing Editor
IAN RANDAL STROCK:
Assistant Editor
SCOTT L. TOWNER:
Editorial Assistant
A. BRUCE CHATTERTON:
Publisher
TERRI CZECZKO:
Art Director
ANTHONY BARI:
Junior Designer
CAROLE DIXON:
Production Director
CYNTHIA MANSON:
Director of Marketing and Subsidiary Rights
CONSTANCE SCARBOROUGH:
Contracts Manager
VEENA RAGHAVAN:
Director, Special Projects
CHRISTIAN DORBANDT:
Newsstand Marketing and Promotion
DENNIS JONES:
Newsstand Operations Manager
ELIZABETH BEATTY:
Circulation Director
PHYLLIS JESSEN:
Circulation Planning Director
JUDY DORMAN:
Advertising Coordinator
IRENE BOZOKI:
Classified Advertising Director
BARBARA ZINKHEN:
Classified Advedising Manager

ADVERTISING OFFICES
NEW YORK
(212) 557-9100

JOEL DAVIS
President

CARL BARTEE
Vice President
Manufacturing

JOE De FALCO
Vice President
Finance

MARY TZIMOKAS
Vice President
Circulation

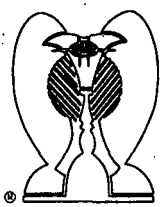
MA

Please do not send us your manuscript until you've gotten a copy of our manuscript guidelines. To obtain this, send us a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope (what stationery stores call a number 10 envelope), and a note requesting this information. Please write "manuscript guidelines" on the bottom left-hand corner of the outside envelope. The address for this and for all editorial correspondence is *IAsfm*, Davis Publications, Inc. 380 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY 10168-0035. While we're always looking for new writers, please, in the interest of time-saving, find out what we're looking for, and how to prepare it, before submitting your story.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ChiconV®
The 49th World Science Fiction Convention

Hal Clement
(Author Guest of Honor)
Martin Harry Greenberg
(Editor Guest of Honor)
Richard Powers
(Artist Guest of Honor)
Jon & Joni Stopa
(Fan Guests of Honor)
Marta Randall
(Toastmaster)



29 Aug. – 2 Sep. 1991 Hyatt Regency Chicago

Chicon V will include panels and workshops in the areas of academics, fandom, children's activities, cities, literature, science, arts, desktop publishing and more. We will also have readings and autograph sessions, a masquerade ball and other dances, a gigantic dealers room where you will be able to find anything related to science fiction and fantasy, an art show, and auction, a print shop, a con suite and other parties, video & film presentations, gaming, filking, the Hugo Awards ceremonies, exhibits dealing with the history of fanzines and Worldcons, a hologram exhibit, and live theater. Please come, join us, and mingle with others who love science fiction as much as you do.

To Join, Write Us At: Chicon V Registration
PO Box 218121 Upper Arlington, OH
43221-8121

Rates for Attending memberships:

$125	until	**15 Jul '91**
$150		**at the door**

Supporting memberships $30 (not available after 15 July '91)

Child's memberships $75 (not available after 15 July '91)

A child is any person born after 28 August 1980. Children's Memberships will include the use of Chicon V child-care services.

Please include your name, address, phone, and the name you wish to appear on your badge for each membership.

All membership fees are quoted in US dollars; please make checks payable to "Chicon V". All checks must be drawn on US or Canadian banks; we can also accept Postal Money Orders as long as they are payable in US currency.

Hotel: Room rates for Chicon V will be **$70** per night single/double, **$90** triple and **$110** quad. RESERVATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST FROM THE CHICON V PO BOX. Please obtain a reservation form to ensure that you are properly booked with the convention.

proved to be the great turning point of my life.

After I wrote it, the rejections stopped! On rare occasions, something I have written has not satisfied the first person to whom I have submitted it, but in that case, a second person has snapped it up. In the half-century since "Nightfall" was written, not one of all the thousands of stories, essays, and books I have turned out has failed to be published.

Secondly, Campbell accepted me as a major writer and urged me to write the early stories of the "Foundation" series, which went on (to my complete surprise) to bring me fame and fortune.

And thirdly, "Nightfall" itself, for some reason, did not die. In fact, with each year, it seemed to loom more and more as a classic. I don't recall that, on its first appearance, it made much of a splash but the splashes started in time. It was endlessly reprinted, and I began to include it in my own collections, so that year after year new readers had a chance to read it.

It is routinely included in all classes given in science fiction these days in high schools and colleges, and I have received letter after letter telling me that the students enjoyed "Nightfall" more than any other story assigned to them.

Every once in a while, readers are asked to vote on their favorite science fiction stories of all time, and "Nightfall" almost invariably ends up in first place.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mind you, I don't agree with any of this. I do *not* think that "Nightfall" is the best science fiction story ever written. I do *not* even think it is the best science fiction story I have ever written. I have authored many science fiction stories that I *know* are better written and with which I am far more satisfied. But I am no judge and there is something about "Nightfall" (whatever it might be) that pleases people.

For that reason, in all the fifty years, I have never tried to polish "Nightfall" or improve its style. In all its numerous reappearances, it has always been printed *exactly* as it was in the original. I even refrained from removing the one paragraph that John Campbell added, which I hate because it is not something I would have written. My feeling has always been, however, that rewriting is not fair. Let readers see it as it was, warts and all.

Then, in 1989, my good friend, Martin Harry Greenberg, asked me if I would ever consider doing a sequel to "Nightfall" and I shuddered and said, "Never. It's a complete story and I have nothing more to say in the matter."

Whereupon, Marty said that Robert Silverberg would like to novelize it, if I would give my permission. I was thunderstruck. I am very fond of Bob and I am a great admirer of his writing, and I couldn't believe that he would be willing to submerge himself in a story of mine.

Silverberg and I corresponded on

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

congratulates the winners of the 1990 Nebula Awards

given by the Science Fiction Writers of America

Best Novel
Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea
by Ursula K. Le Guin

Best Novella
"The Hemingway Hoax"
by Joe Haldeman
(*IAsfm*, April 1990)

Best Novelette
"Tower of Babylon"
by Ted Chiang

Best Short Story
"Bears Discover Fire"
by Terry Bisson
(*IAsfm*, August 1990)

Grand Master
Lester Del Rey

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the matter and I said, "Bob, if you do this, you will have to agree to remain Asimovian. No vulgar language. No steamy sex. No excessive violence."

Silverberg agreed readily, and he had a condition of his own. "Isaac," he said, "if I do this, I want equal billing. I don't want my name printed in small letters."

"Bob," I said, "if you think I would ever try to overshadow a collaborator, you little know me."

Silverberg kept to the agreement. He sent me his outline, his first draft, his final copy. I went over everything meticulously and made some changes (very few, in fact). He wrote so carefully in my style and remained so true to the concept of the story that I was ravished with pleasure. It was as though I had written it myself —only better.

The book appeared in the fall of 1990 under the title of *Nightfall,* and with our names on the cover in large and equal lettering. And, I am glad to say, it has done very well.

Incidentally, I don't mean to imply that everyone is unanimous with delight over *Nightfall.* There are critics who have a harsh word or two to say of my original story.

In the October 1990 issue of *Locus*, *Nightfall* received two reviews by two reviewers who were born many years after the tale first appeared. One of them said, "—it is a painfully dated story, of historical interest but not the sort of thing I would have marked for resurrection and the attention of a new generation of readers."

Of course it is painfully dated. It was written fifty years ago, for goodness' sake. How many stories written today are not going to seem painfully dated in 2041? And my critic-friend may not have marked it for resurrection but that is only because he has failed to notice that it has never died and therefore requires no resurrection.

The other reviewer said, "Read now, the original story imparts the musty fragrance of the pulps. . . . Who, these days, writes a story where characters have names like Theremon 762 and Faro 247?"

Dead right. The story was written in the days when pulps were riding high, so it has that musty fragrance. Did the reviewer expect me to write a 1991 story in 1941? What's more, if the story sounds juvenile in spots, it was because it was written by a juvenile.

Why don't these terribly intelligent critics compare *Nightfall* not to stories of today, but to other stories published in "Nightfall" 's own time by writers older and more experienced than I, and tell me why it is my story that still lives. I would really like to know. ●

MOVING? If you want your subscription to *IAsfm* to keep up with you, send both your old address and your new one (and the ZIP codes for both, please!) to our subscription department: Box 7058, Red Oak, Iowa 51566.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

Dear Isaac,

Your editorial "Simile" makes some excellent points, of course, but I fear it also condones a far too prevalent mistake. You write that "Chastity . . . describes the behavior of a person who avoids all sexual contact because he or she finds it illegal, or immoral, or merely distasteful." Admittedly, and unfortunately, the word has acquired this secondary meaning, for which "continence" or "sexual abstinence" is much preferable. But properly speaking, "chastity" is the "state of being chaste," and the latter word (from Latin *castus*), means "Innocent of unlawful sexual intercourse; virtuous." (Webster's Fifth Collegiate; the OED agrees.) Thus chaste people can and often do enjoy lusty sex lives. They simply keep this within the bounds of marriage.

I don't think I'm just being pedantic. The beautiful and powerful English language is suffering degradation at a terrifying rate. Idiocies such as "flaunt" for "flout" and "sententious" for "pompous, long-winded" increase almost daily. Granted, words do change meaning in the course of time—the history of "nice" is amusing, and so is the history of "amuse"—but in the past this happened gradually enough that clear, precise communication was always possible. No longer is that the case.

Writers have an obvious reason for concern, but society as a whole will be in a bad way when language has become gibberish. We owe it to our children and grandchildren not only to uphold the tattered standard, but to try to repair (not "try and repair"!) the damage. I'm sure you agree, and hope you don't mind having a small error of yours made the example. Lord knows I make enough of my own. Regards,

Poul Anderson
Orinda, CA

I stand corrected, Poul. —However, I must point out that Ophelia, the young lady under discussion, was single and, presumably, virginal, so that my definition of chaste applies to her certainly. Then, too, a woman with an extraordinarily active but entirely legal sex life may be chaste, but she could scarcely be described as being "as chaste as ice" and it was that simile that was under discussion. I know—I'm quibbling.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov,

In your Mid-December issue in the story, "The Passage of Night

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trains," by Mr. Tony Daniel there are some glaring errors about trains.

First off, the engineer blows the whistle (not the conductor), also since there is a caboose on the train, that is where you will usually find the conductor. The engineer also calls signals.

The idea of laying down between the rails is crazy and stupid. As the train passes over you, you would be sucked up off the roadbed and into the undercarriage of the cars. This would cause great bodily harm.

As an engineer on a Northeastern rail road (not Conrail), I'll tell you it is a bad idea to have this in a story in a magazine as widely read as yours. Young people might try this and be badly hurt.

I've read your magazine since the Spring 1977 issue and this is my first letter to you, as I feel so strongly about the above matter.

A while back you mentioned you had no connection to the TV show "Star Trek." There is a connection between you and it on an interview record with Mr. Shatner, DeForest Kelley, Mark Lenard (Sarek), and The Great Bird of the Galaxy; Gene Roddenberry. It's called *Inside Star Trek,* and it was released in 1976 by CBS Records.

Thank you for a very enjoyable magazine every month and I hope to read it for a long time to come.

Yours Sincerely,

Robert R. White, Jr.
Buffalo, NY

Well, there's no real *connection. I didn't actually write for it or consult on it or anything of the sort. A simple interview is nothing.*

—Isaac Asimov

Dr. Asimov,

Even though I am well versed in the computer field—twenty-five years, current position Computer Scientist—I still attempt to impress other computer people with my lightning fast arithmetic. Although I try to convince them I am a genius, it actually came from a book I read back in the forgotten past that showed me many shortcuts in arithmetic. Since I could not remember the name of the book, I did not feel too bad about saying it was my idea.

Oh well. When I started reading your editorial in the Mid-December 1990 magazine, the words "Quick and Easy Math" jumped out at me and hollered, "You didn't forget the name, it was a PYSCHOLOGICAL BLOCK." The next time I impress someone I guess I will have to give you the credit.

Perhaps you should publish this book again. Computers are so much involved in everything we do now, people may be interested in going back to manual calculations, even just for amusement.

It might even be enough to change the schools back to where children learn and enjoy their classes.

Sincerely yours,

Frank J. Virginia, Jr.
Hackettstown, NJ

For something like half a century now, I have been trying to make the process of learning pleasant for people. Occasionally, I get the feeling that I may even, in a few cases, be succeeding. Letters like yours make me feel good.

—Isaac Asimov

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The second book of "a grand fantasy on a scale approaching *Lord of the Rings.*"*

STONE OF FAREWELL

Book Two of
Memory, Sorrow and Thorn

TAD WILLIAMS

"Few fantasies have attempted the scope and depth of Williams' examination of the struggle between being and unbeing, and fewer still have achieved the complexity of his world-vision. In this purest of fantasies, created solely by the vigor of Williams' imagination, readers will find an exquisite rendering of the conflict between forces of light and darkness."

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

$5.99
DAW Books, Inc.
Distributed by Penguin USA

**The Cincinnati Post*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dear Dr. Asimov:

In your editorial "Short Cuts" you made the point that relying on calculators is not conducive to mental sharpness. I think this is a point well taken, but an even more sinister problem may be lurking in the "calculator" generation. Many in this generation may never develop much in the way of mental fitness to lose.

When I was a graduate teaching assistant for an introductory statistics course I noticed several disturbing trends. First, many of the students I had had no "feel" for the numbers. They had never developed the ability to get "ball park" estimates of numbers in their heads. Why bother—the calculator gives you the answer exactly with ten decimal places thrown in! As a result, many of the students wrote down answers that were "obviously" incorrect. For example, means were written down that were an order of magnitude above all the numbers in the data set. We required the student to "show their work" and write down the intermediate calculations. In grading these papers I would notice other "obvious" errors that were painstakingly copied from the sacred LCD screen of the student's trusty calculator. They rarely got suspicious of numbers that were an order of magnitude too big or too small. Second, most students wrote down ALL of the digits displayed on the screen in their answers. A full lecture and reminders about significant digits was to no avail. The thought seemed to be, "If god had wanted us to write down answers with one or two decimal places then he would have made calculators with three digit LCD's." Third, as you mentioned, the use of calculators leads to a mental paralysis. "What's half of .05?" Seven button pushes later (including a button push to turn the thing on; excluding HP reverse Polish) I'd get several answers but the majority correctly answered ".025." Asking a student without a calculator that question would most often evoke a look of terror!

I think calculators are great and I wouldn't think of banning them from our schools, but I think educators should stress that the calculator is a tool, and like any tool the user needs instructions on how to use it properly. Foremost, the user needs to be intimate with the material the tool is shaping whether that material is wood or metal or numbers.

Mark Shurtleff
Dallas, TX

You make some interesting points. It seems to me that there are no devices that are so clever that they cannot be spoiled by human stupidity.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov:

Let me begin by apologizing for my letter-writing form and my execrable typing. I have had very little practice in either.

Having just received my Mid-December issue of your magazine, I began as usual with the editorial and moved on to read the letters from other fans. The letter from Patrick Hoppe especially caught my attention, as he asked a question which I also have had—to wit,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has Janet Kagan published any novels or collections of short stories on Mirabile? I agree completely with Mr. Hoppe that these stories are excellent, as must your magazine to have published three. Unfortunately, I have not kept my back issues, and so cannot reread these tales again and again as I do other favorite authors (yourself included). My habit is to pass my issues along to less fortunate friends who do not subscribe. Obviously, the answer to my inquiry should be, "Hie thee to a bookstore and inquire within," which I did and received no joy. With so many new stories to print, it would not be feasible for your magazine to run these tales again, but would there be any chance of buying back issues which contained them?

Thank you for your wonderful magazine—no matter how many pennies I have to pinch, I will keep my subscription as long as you publish—a long, long time, I devoutly hope.

Sincerely yours,

Anne T. McKnight
Memphis, TN

You see how you are punished by your thoughtlessness. If you kept your magazines for future reference, your joys would be greatly multiplied. And far from passing on the issues to your less fortunate friends, you should urge them to get subscriptions of their own so that this magazine can stay in business and continue to supply you with the kind of stories you want.

—Isaac Asimov

A hardcover edition of Mirabile, *a novel that incorporates all of Janet Kagan's Mama Jason stories, will be released by Tor Books in October.*

—Sheila Williams

Dear Dr. Asimov,

As a graduate student of English and literature, I spend much of my time reading the texts prescribed for my classes. Even when I have some spare time, I tend to be afflicted by the "graduate student syndrome"—the impulse to read only those works which are a concrete part of the literary canon. But luckily for me, every four weeks the mailman brings me a copy of your magazine and my attitude changes. I lay Melville and Emerson aside for the two days (maybe three) that it takes me to devour the stories, and somehow, I am always a bit reluctant to return to the "traditional" stuff afterward. SF seems a bit subversive—the English department at my university does not consider it a field worthy of graduate study, and those of us who do read it are like a secret society. We know which of us will understand a reference to Harlan Ellison or William Gibson, and which will simply shake their heads and say "Who?"

I also try to slip some SF into the freshman composition and literature courses I teach because I think more people should be "exposed" to it. But at the same time, I shy away from any attempt to make SF part of the canon, because the maverick roguishness of SF as a field of literature is one of its finer qualities. I have no desire to pin SF down, give it a neat label, and dissect it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In any case, *IAsfm* helps keep me sane. It prevents me from believing that nineteenth-century literature is all there is to read, and it provides me with excellent stories to savor (such as Kim Stanley Robinson's outstanding "A Short, Sharp Shock") and a selection of poetry that just gets better and better.

Don't ever stop what you're doing with this magazine.

Diane G. Olbris
Willimantic, CT

It's hard to believe that English departments still more or less outlaw science fiction. Please continue your efforts to bring them into the latter end of the twentieth century.
—Isaac Asimov

Dear Isaac:

You astonish me! Twenty-eight years ago, you reviewed my book, *The Ancient Engineers,* for the New York *Times.* When you speak of Shakespeare's "the clock hath stricken three" as an anachronism (*IAsfm,* Dec. 1990, p.8) you forgot that in *The Ancient Engineers* (Ballantine paperback, pp. 145ff; new revised Marboro hardback, pp. 142f—Advt.) I explained that this was *not* an anachronism. In Caesar's time, the inventors of Hellenistic Alexandria had developed clepsydras (water clocks) by which, at predetermined times, stone balls fell into bronze dishes, or trumpets tooted, or cuckoos whistled. So the clock had indeed stricken three.

A thing that men of Caesar's time did not have, and that would not appear for many centuries, was the circular clock face with rotating hands.

Sincerely,

L. Sprague de Camp
Plano, TX

I know about the clepsydra, Sprague, and you know about it, but I'll bet Shakespeare didn't or wild horses couldn't have kept him from saying "clepsydra." My feeling is that old Bill was thinking of the kind of clocks they had in the churchtowers in his day.
—Isaac Asimov

Escape to a World of Science Fiction Fans

Let your imagination run wild! Link up to an online computer network filled with other science fiction buffs—they're ready to discuss their interests with *you*! Call **1-800-545-5047, ext. 5158**—and we'll give you FREE software and FREE online time to get you started.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

N E W S F R O M

Questar
SCIENCE FICTION FANTASY

The thrilling saga continues!

WINDS OF WAR HOWL THROUGH SPACE!

The second installment of the compelling epic of a future World War II in deep space from Ken Kato!

AD 2425. Yamato, the imperialistic, tyrannical Japanese Sector of colonized space has smashed treaties and brazenly conquered peaceful peoples. Its powerhungry emperor, armed with a wealth of devastating weapons and a billion devoted, hi-tech samurai, has Amerika in his sights. And unless the American colony galvanizes its forces against this fierce enemy, Yamato will unleash its might...and enslave Amerika!

"It is a space opera for moderns with the power to please those who ordinarily don't care for space opera ...Doc Smith and Ron Hubbard never produced anything to match YAMATO."
—John Dalmas, author of *The Regiment*

Cover art by Royo
0-446-36189-5/$4.50
(In Canada: $5.99)

Also read:
Yamato—A Rage in Heaven, Part 1
0-446-36141-0/$4.50
(In Canada: $5.99)

A WORD FROM BRIAN THOMSEN

For me a new book does not necessarily have to have the words "First time in print" on it. It just has to be new to me. As a result, I can still be treated to the new Heinlein, Herbert, Bester, and Sturgeon despite the fact that their illustrious output was unjustly curtailed several years ago.

HEAVEN CHRONICLES is a new book. This is the first time "Outcast of Heaven Belt" has been paired with Joan's other asteroid belt story, "Legacy," and the many fans of *Catspaw* and her other recent books can enjoy the latest volume in the Vinge canon as we eagerly await this fall's publication of *The Summer Queen*. Both were new to me and I'm glad I didn't miss them.

When you see me around ask me about the month where Summer arrives in the Fall.

Questar is a registered trademark of Warner Books, Inc.

ALSO THIS MONTH:

ALSO THIS MONTH:

THE HEAVEN CHRONICLES
by Joan D. Vinge

Award-winner Joan D. Vinge's acclaimed asteroid belt adventures, available for the first time in one volume!

Heaven Belt, a fabulously rich asteroid system, is the last hope for the desperate crew of the starship *Ranger*. However, before they can explain their quest, they are attacked by a dying society of Belters torn by civil war. Now the *Ranger's* mission of mercy has become a race for survival as they fight to save their ship—and their lives.

0-446-36118-6/$4.99
(In Canada: $5.99)

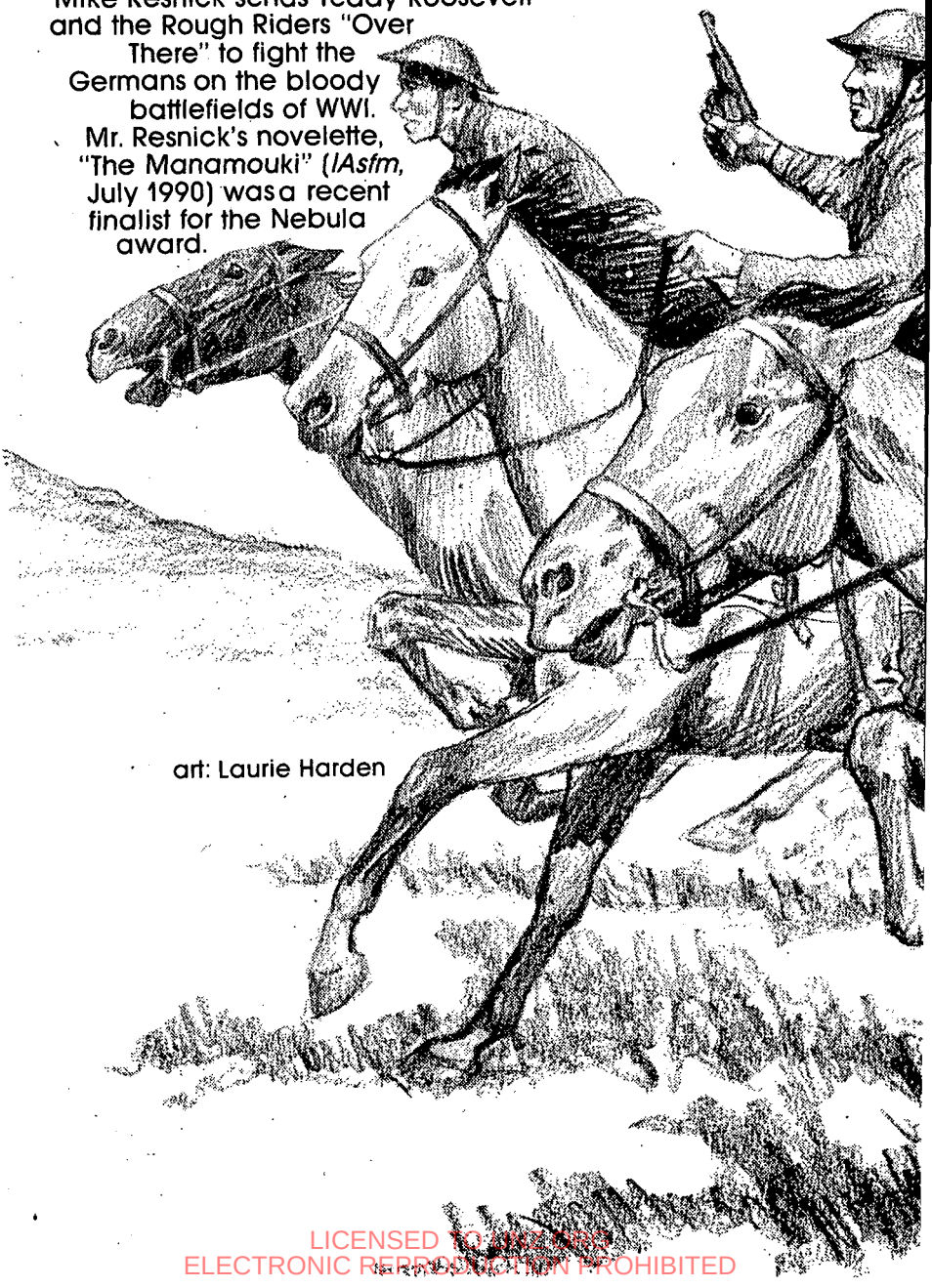
Also read:
Catspaw
0-445-20531-8/$4.95
(In Canada: $5.95)
Snow Queen
0-445-20529-6/$4.95
(In Canada: $5.95)

© 1991 Warner Books, Inc. Printed in USA.

AVAILABLE AT BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE WARNER BOOKS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mike Resnick sends Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders "Over There" to fight the Germans on the bloody battlefields of WWI. Mr. Resnick's novelette, "The Manamouki" (*IAsfm*, July 1990) was a recent finalist for the Nebula award.



art: Laurie Harden

LICENSED TO JIGZONE
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Mike Resnick

OVER THERE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I respectfully ask permission to raise two divisions for immediate service at the front under the bill which has just become law, and hold myself ready to raise four divisions, if you so direct. I respectfully refer for details to my last letters to the Secretary of War.

—Theodore Roosevelt
Telegram to President Woodrow Wilson, May 18, 1917

I very much regret that I cannot comply with the request in your telegram of yesterday. The reasons I have stated in a public statement made this morning, and I need not assure you that my conclusions were based upon imperative considerations of public policy and not upon personal or private choice.

—Woodrow Wilson,
Telegram to Theodore Roosevelt, May 19, 1917

The date was May 22, 1917.

Woodrow Wilson looked up at the burly man standing impatiently before his desk.

"This will necessarily have to be an extremely brief meeting, Mr. Roosevelt," he said wearily. "I have consented to it only out of respect for the fact that you formerly held the office that I am now privileged to hold."

"I appreciate that, Mr. President," said Theodore Roosevelt, shifting his weight anxiously from one leg to the other.

"Well, then?" said Wilson.

"You know why I'm here," said Roosevelt bluntly. "I want your permission to reassemble my Rough Riders and take them over to Europe."

"As I keep telling you, Mr. Roosevelt—that's out of the question."

"You haven't told *me* anything!" snapped Roosevelt. "And I have no interest in what you tell the press."

"Then I'm telling you now," said Wilson firmly, "I can't just let any man who wants to gather up a regiment go fight in the war. We have procedures, and chains of command, and . . . "

"I'm not just *any* man," said Roosevelt. "And I have every intention of honoring our procedures and chain of command." He glared at the president. "I created many of those procedures myself."

Wilson stared at his visitor for a long moment. "Why are you so anxious to go to war, Mr. Roosevelt? Does violence hold so much fascination for you?"

"I abhor violence and bloodshed," answered Roosevelt. "I believe that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

war should never be resorted to when it is honorably possible to avoid it. But once war has begun, then the only thing to do is win it as swiftly and decisively as possible. I believe that I can help to accomplish that end."

"Mr. Roosevelt, may I point out that you are fifty-eight years old, and according to my reports you have been in poor health ever since returning from Brazil three years ago?"

"Nonsense!" said Roosevelt defensively. "I feel as fit as a bull moose!"

"A one-eyed bull moose," replied Wilson dryly. Roosevelt seemed about to protest, but Wilson raised a hand to silence him. "Yes, Mr. Roosevelt, I know that you lost the vision in your left eye during a boxing match while you were president." He couldn't quite keep the distaste for such juvenile and adventurous escapades out of his voice.

"I'm not here to discuss my health," answered Roosevelt gruffly, "but the reactivation of my commission as a colonel in the United States Army."

Wilson shook his head. "You have my answer. You've told me nothing that might change my mind."

"I'm about to."

"Oh?"

"Let's be perfectly honest, Mr. President. The Republican nomination is mine for the asking, and however the war turns out, the Democrats will be sitting ducks. Half the people hate you for entering the war so late, and the other half hate you for entering it at all." Roosevelt paused. "If you will return me to active duty and allow me to organize my Rough Riders, I will give you my personal pledge that I will neither seek nor accept the Republican nomination in 1920."

"It means that much to you?" asked Wilson, arching a thin eyebrow.

"It does, sir."

"I'm impressed by your passion, and I don't doubt your sincerity, Mr. Roosevelt," said Wilson. "But my answer must still be no. I am serving my second term. I have no intention of running again in 1920, I do not need your political support, and I will not be a party to such a deal."

"Then you are a fool, Mr. President," said Roosevelt. "Because I am going anyway, and you have thrown away your only opportunity, slim as it may be, to keep the Republicans out of the White House."

"I will not reactivate your commission, Mr. Roosevelt."

Roosevelt pulled two neatly folded letters out of his lapel pocket and placed them on the president's desk.

"What are these?" asked Wilson, staring at them as if they might bite him at any moment.

"Letters from the British and the French, offering me commissions in *their* armies." Roosevelt paused. "I am first, foremost, and always an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American, Mr. President, and I had entertained no higher hope than leading my men into battle under the Stars and Stripes—but I am going to participate in this war, and you are not going to stop me." And now, for the first time, he displayed the famed Roosevelt grin. "I have some thirty reporters waiting for me on the lawn of the White House. Shall I tell them that I am fighting for the country that I love, or shall I tell them that our European allies are more concerned with winning this damnable war than our own president?"

"This is blackmail, Mr. Roosevelt!" said Wilson, outraged.

"I believe that is the word for it," said Roosevelt, still grinning. "I would like you to direct Captain Frank McCoy to leave his current unit and report to me. I'll handle the rest of the details myself." He paused again. "The press is waiting, Mr. President. What shall I tell them?"

"Tell them anything you want," muttered Wilson furiously. "Only get out of this office!"

"Thank you, sir," said Roosevelt, turning on his heel and marching out with an energetic bounce to his stride.

Wilson waited a moment, then spoke aloud. "You can come in now, Joseph."

Joseph Tummulty, his personal secretary, entered the Oval Office.

"Were you listening?" asked Wilson.

"Yes, sir."

"Is there any way out of it?"

"Not without getting a black eye in the press."

"That's what I was afraid of," said Wilson.

"He's got you over a barrel, Mr. President."

"I wonder what he's really after?" mused Wilson thoughtfully. "He's been a governor, an explorer, a war hero, a police commissioner, an author, a big-game hunter, and a president." He paused, mystified. "What more can he want from life?"

"Personally, sir," said Tummulty, making no attempt to hide the contempt in his voice, "I think that damned cowboy is looking to charge up one more San Juan Hill."

Roosevelt stood before his troops, as motley an assortment of warriors as had been assembled since the last incarnation of the Rough Riders. There were military men and cowboys, professional athletes and adventurers, hunters and ranchers, barroom brawlers and Indians, tennis players and wrestlers, even a trio of Maasai *elmoran* he had met on safari in Africa.

"Some of 'em look a little long in the tooth, Colonel," remarked Frank McCoy, his second-in-command.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Some of *us* are a little long in the tooth too, Frank," said Roosevelt with a smile.

"And some of 'em haven't started shaving yet," continued McCoy wryly.

"Well, there's nothing like a war to grow them up in a hurry."

Roosevelt turned away from McCoy and faced his men, waiting briefly until he had their attention. He paused for a moment to make sure that the journalists who were traveling with the regiment had their pencils and notebooks out, and then spoke.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we are about to embark upon a great adventure. We are privileged to be present at a crucial point in the history of the world. In the terrible whirlwind of war, all the great nations of the world are facing the supreme test of their courage and dedication. All the alluring but futile theories of the pacifists have vanished at the first sound of gunfire."

Roosevelt paused to clear his throat, then continued in his surprisingly high-pitched voice. "This war is the greatest the world has ever seen. The vast size of the armies, the tremendous slaughter, the loftiness of the heroism shown and the hideous horror of the brutalities committed, the valor of the fighting men and the extraordinary ingenuity of those who have designed and built the fighting machines, the burning patriotism of the peoples who defend their homelands and the far-reaching complexity of the plans of the leaders—all are on a scale so huge that nothing in past history can be compared with them.

"The issues at stake are fundamental. The free people of the world have banded together against tyrannous militarism, and it is not too much to say that the outcome will largely determine, for those of us who love liberty above all else, whether or not life remains worth living."

He paused again, and stared up and down the ranks of his men.

"Against such a vast and complex array of forces, it may seem to you that we will just be another cog in the military machine of the allies, that one regiment cannot possibly make a difference." Roosevelt's chin jutted forward pugnaciously. "I say to you that this is rubbish! We represent a society dedicated to the proposition that every free man makes a difference. And I give you my solemn pledge that the Rough Riders will make a difference in the fighting to come!"

It was possible that his speech wasn't finished, that he still had more to say . . . . but if he did, it was drowned out beneath the wild and raucous cheering of his men.

One hour later they boarded the ship to Europe.

Roosevelt summoned a corporal and handed him a hand-written letter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The man saluted and left, and Roosevelt returned to his chair in front of his tent. He was about to pick up a book when McCoy approached him.

"Your daily dispatch to General Pershing?" he asked dryly.

"Yes," answered Roosevelt. "I can't understand what is wrong with the man! Here we are, primed and ready to fight, and he's kept us well behind the front for the better part of two months!"

"I know, Colonel."

"It just doesn't make any sense! Doesn't he know what the Rough Riders did at San Juan Hill?"

"That was a long time ago, sir," said McCoy.

"I tell you, Frank, these men are the élite—the cream of the crop! They weren't drafted by lottery. Every one of them volunteered, and every one was approved personally by you or by me. Why are we being wasted here? There's a war to be won!"

"Pershing's got a lot to consider, Colonel," said McCoy. "He's got a half million American troops to disperse, he's got to act in concert with the French and the British, he's got to consider his lines of supply, he's . . . "

"Don't patronize me, Frank!" snapped Roosevelt. "We've assembled a brilliant fighting machine here, and he's ignoring us. There *has* to be a reason. I want to know what it is!"

McCoy shrugged helplessly. "I have no answer, sir."

"Well, I'd better get one soon from Pershing!" muttered Roosevelt. "We didn't come all this way to help in some mopping-up operation after the battle's been won." He stared at the horizon. "There's a glorious crusade being fought in the name of liberty, and I plan to be a part of it."

He continued staring off into the distance long after McCoy had left him.

A private approached Roosevelt as the former president was eating lunch with his officers.

"Dispatch from General Pershing, sir," said the private, handing him an envelope with a snappy salute.

"Thank you," said Roosevelt. He opened the envelope, read the message, and frowned.

"Bad news, Colonel?" asked McCoy.

"He says to be patient," replied Roosevelt. "Patient?" he repeated furiously. "By God, I've been patient long enough! Jake—saddle my horse!"

"What are you going to do, Colonel?" asked one of his lieutenants.

"I'm going to go meet face-to-face with Pershing," said Roosevelt, getting to his feet. "This is intolerable!"

"We don't even know where he is, sir."

"I'll find him," replied Roosevelt confidently.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're more likely to get lost or shot," said McCoy, the only man who dared to speak to him so bluntly.

"Runs With Deer! Matupu!" shouted Roosevelt. "Saddle your horses!"

A burly Indian and a tall Maasai immediately got to their feet and went to the stable area.

Roosevelt turned back to McCoy. "I'm taking the two best trackers in the regiment. Does that satisfy you, Mr. McCoy?"

"It does not," said McCoy. "I'm going along, too."

Roosevelt shook his head. "You're in command of the regiment in my absence. You're staying here."

"But—"

"That's an order," said Roosevelt firmly.

"Will you at least take along a squad of sharpshooters, Colonel?" persisted McCoy.

"Frank, we're forty miles behind the front, and I'm just going to talk to Pershing, not shoot him."

"We don't even know where the front *is*," said McCoy.

"It's where we're *not*," said Roosevelt grimly. "And that's what I'm going to change."

He left the mess tent without another word.

The first four French villages they passed were deserted, and consisted of nothing but the burnt skeletons of houses and shops. The fifth had two buildings still standing—a manor house and a church—and they had been turned into Allied hospitals. Soldiers with missing limbs, soldiers with faces swatched in filthy bandages, soldiers with gaping holes in their bodies lay on cots and floors, shivering in the cold damp air, while an undermanned and harassed medical team did their best to keep them alive.

Roosevelt stopped long enough to determine General Pershing's whereabouts, then walked among the wounded to offer words of encouragement while trying to ignore the unmistakeable stench of gangrene and the stinking scent of disinfectant. Finally he remounted his horse and joined his two trackers.

They passed a number of corpses on their way to the front. Most had been plundered of their weapons, and one, lying upon its back, displayed a gruesome, toothless smile.

"Shameful!" muttered Roosevelt as he looked down at the grinning body.

"Why?" asked Runs With Deer.

"It's obvious that the man had gold teeth, and they have been removed."

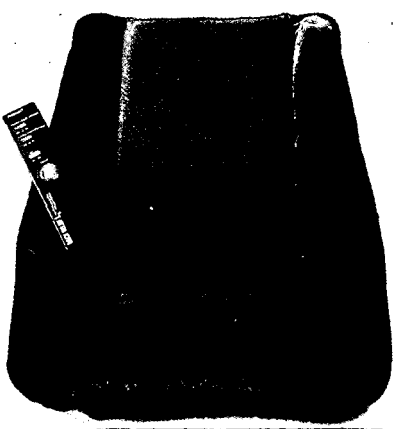
"It is honorable to take trophies of the enemy," asserted the Indian.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAIL ★ ORDER ★ MALL

▼ THE MAGICAL SPARE BED

It's almost like pulling an extra bed out of a hat. Unlike most spare beds that gobble up storage space and are unwieldy to move, this one rolls down to fit a 36"-long, 3"-diameter canvas case, to stash in a closet corner, car trunk, camper, anywhere. Yet it unrolls in minutes to a full-size 27" x 73" bed that will even accommodate 6-footers. supports up to 500 pounds and is comfortable to boot. The secret's in the inventive construction: a cotton canvas sling is supported on laminated steel legs with 6 steel springs for cushioning and stability on rough ground. Toss the carrying strap over your shoulder and go — camping, beach, poolside; the 10" legs keep it off damp ground and sand. Of course, this bed is indispensable at home, country home, dorm — even for kids in motel rooms. A superb value at **$61.98** ($12.25) #A1931.



▼ BACK RELIEF BY POLLENEX

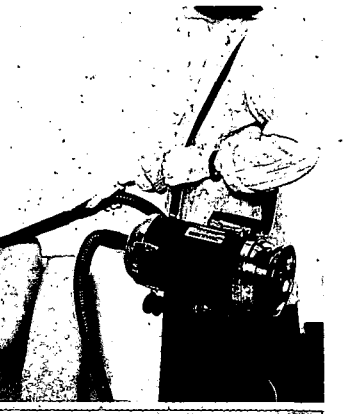
Are you one of the millions of Americans who suffers from low back pain? Do hours of prolonged sitting leave you aching or numb? If so, then the Pollenex Back Relief is just what the doctor ordered. Back Relief's unique design cradles your back in comfort and features multiple combinations of massage and heat. The inflatable lumbar cushion conforms to the shape of your back. Dual massaging elements can be used separately or together for full back massage. Handy remote control lets you select upper/lower massage, low and high intensity as well as heat control. And the soothing massager works 2 ways - adapter #1 plugs into any indoor electrical outlet while adapter #2 plugs into car, van, or truck cigarette lighter. So Back Relief is perfect for car, home, or office. Plush, durable fabric cover adds extra comfort. **$119.98** ($6.75) #A2001.

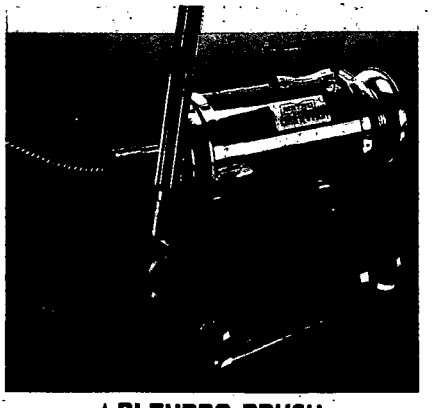
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAIL ★ ORDER ★ MALL

▼ OMNIVAC®: POWERFUL, PORTABLE, & PRICED TO PLEASE!

The Omnivac® by Metro® is the portable canister vacuum cleaner/blower that simply blows away the competition. So compact (17 inches x 7 inches) and weighing only 11 pounds, it is a homemaker's dream. But don't let the compact size and portability fool you! The Omnivac® features an all-steel body and packs a full 4.0 peak h.p. 2-speed motor for incredible suction and deep cleaning power that is far superior to most ordinary vacuums. The turbo-driven powerhead attachment features a high speed rotating brush that removes ground-in carpet dirt as effectively as bulky upright models. Plus, its double swivel neck gets into tight spots under furniture and in corners. But it doesn't stop here! A reversible air blower provides 200 mph power for sweeping garages, patios, and walkways—and it inflates inflatables too. The Omnivac® can be carried easily over your shoulder with the comfortable shoulder strap or it can roll along effortlessly on its swivel caster wheels. The full-featured 10-piece accessory kit comes with a 6 foot hose, 2 extension wands, bi-turbo powerhead, nozzle, crevice tool, dust brush, floor/wall brush, inflator, powerizer, and shoulder strap. UL approved and made in the USA. And ... as if the Omnivac® weren't enough, we are pleased to offer **ABSOLUTELY FREE** with your order, the Vac 'N' Go, (a $40 value) the high performance ½ horsepower electric hand vacuum. Ideal for quick clean-ups around the house, office, workshop, or in the car, RV, or boat. Includes 110 volt power unit and Pik-all nozzle. Omnivac® attachments will also fit the Vac 'N' Go. Full one year warranty. TWO GREAT VACUUMS — FOR ONE LOW PRICE! Who can resist an offer like this??? **$199.98** ($20.00) #A1996.





▲ BI-TURBO BRUSH

ABSOLUTELY FREE WITH ORDER!

FOR ORDERING INFORMATION SEE BACK COVER.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Germans have never advanced this far south," said Roosevelt. "This man's teeth were taken by his companions." He shook his head. "Shameful!"

Matupu the Maasai merely shrugged. "Perhaps this is not an honorable war."

"We are fighting for an honorable principle," stated Roosevelt. "That makes it an honorable war."

"Then it is an honorable war being waged by dishonorable men," said Matupu.

"Do the Maasai not take trophies?" asked Runs With Deer.

"We take cows and goats and women," answered Matupu. "We do not plunder the dead." He paused. "We do not take scalps."

"There was a time when *we* did not, either," said Runs With Deer. "We were taught to, by the French."

"And we are in France now," said Matupu with some satisfaction, as if everything now made sense to him.

They dismounted after two more hours and walked their horses for the rest of the day, then spent the night in a bombed-out farmhouse. The next morning they were mounted and riding again, and they came to General Pershing's field headquarters just before noon. There were thousands of soldiers bustling about, couriers bringing in hourly reports from the trenches, weapons and tanks being dispatched, convoys of trucks filled with food and water slowly working their way into supply lines.

Roosevelt was stopped a few yards into the camp by a young lieutenant.

"May I ask your business here, sir?"

"I'm here to see General Pershing," answered Roosevelt.

"Just like that?" said the soldier with a smile.

"Son," said Roosevelt, taking off his hat and leaning over the lieutenant, "take a good look at my face." He paused for a moment. "Now go tell General Pershing that Teddy Roosevelt is here to see him."

The lieutenant's eyes widened. "By God, you *are* Teddy Roosevelt!" he exclaimed. Suddenly he reached his hand out. "May I shake your hand first, Mr. President? I just want to be able to tell my parents I did it."

Roosevelt grinned and took the young man's hand in his own, then waited astride his horse while the lieutenant went off to Pershing's quarters. He gazed around the camp; there were ramshackle buildings and ramshackle soldiers, each of which had seen too much action and too little glory. The men's faces were haggard, their eyes haunted, their bodies stooped with exhaustion. The main paths through the camp had turned to mud, and the constant drizzle brought rust, rot, and disease with an equal lack of cosmic concern.

The lieutenant approached Roosevelt, his feet sinking inches into the mud with each step.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"If you'll follow me, Mr. President, he'll see you immediately."

"Thank you," said Roosevelt.

"Watch yourself, Mr. President," said the lieutenant as Roosevelt dismounted. "I have a feeling he's not happy about meeting with you."

"He'll be a damned sight less happy when I'm through with him," said Roosevelt firmly. He turned to his companions. "See to the needs of the horses."

"Yes, sir," said Runs with Deer. "We'll be waiting for you right here."

"How is the battle going?" Roosevelt asked as he and the lieutenant began walking through the mud toward Pershing's quarters. "My Rough Riders have been practically incommunicado since we arrived."

The lieutenant shrugged. "Who knows? All we hear are rumors. The enemy is retreating, the enemy is advancing, we've killed thousands of them, they've killed thousands of us. Maybe the general will tell you; he certainly hasn't seen fit to tell *us*."

They reached the entrance to Pershing's quarters.

"I'll wait here for you, sir," said the lieutenant.

"You're sure you don't mind?" asked Roosevelt. "You can find some orderly to escort me back if it will be a problem."

"No, sir," said the young man earnestly. "It'll be an honor, Mr. President."

"Well, thank you, son," said Roosevelt. He shook the lieutenant's hand again, then walked through the doorway and found himself facing General John J. Pershing.

"Good afternoon, Jack," said Roosevelt, extending his hand.

Pershing looked at Roosevelt's outstretched hand for a moment, then took it.

"Have a seat, Mr. President," he said, indicating a chair.

"Thank you," said Roosevelt, pulling up a chair as Pershing seated himself behind a desk that was covered with maps.

"I mean no disrespect, Mr. President," said Pershing, "but exactly who gave you permission to leave your troops and come here?"

"No one," answered Roosevelt.

"Then why did you do it?" asked Pershing. "I'm told you were accompanied only by a red Indian and a black savage. That's hardly a safe way to travel in a war zone."

"I came here to find out why you have consistently refused my requests to have my Rough Riders moved to the front."

Pershing lit a cigar and offered one to Roosevelt, who refused it.

"There are proper channels for such a request," said the general at last. "You yourself helped create them."

"And I have been using them for almost two months, to no avail."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pershing sighed. "I *have* been a little busy conducting this damned war."

"I'm sure you have," said Roosevelt. "And I have assembled a regiment of the finest fighting men to be found in America, which I am placing at your disposal."

"For which I thank you, Mr. President."

"I don't want you to thank me!" snapped Roosevelt. "I want you to unleash me."

"When the time is right, your Rough Riders will be brought into the conflict," said Pershing.

"When the time is right?" repeated Roosevelt. "Your men are dying like flies! Every village I've passed has become a bombed-out ghost town! You needed us two months ago, Jack!"

"Mr. President, I've got half a million men to maneuver. *I'll* decide when and where I need your regiment."

"When?" persisted Roosevelt.

"You'll be the first to know."

"That's not good enough!"

"It will have to be."

"You listen to me, Jack Pershing!" said Roosevelt heatedly. "I *made* you a general! I think the very least you owe me is an answer. When will my men be brought into the conflict?"

Pershing stared at him from beneath shaggy black eyebrows for a long moment. "What the hell did you have to come here for, anyway?" he said at last.

"I told you: to get an answer."

"I don't mean to my headquarters," said Pershing. "I mean, what is a fifty-eight-year-old man with a blind eye and a game leg doing in the middle of a war?"

"This is the greatest conflict in history, and it's being fought over principles that every free man holds dear. How could I *not* take part in it?"

"You could have just stayed home and made speeches and raised funds."

"And you could have retired after Mexico and spent the rest of your life playing golf," Roosevelt shot back. "But you didn't, and I didn't, because neither of us is that kind of man. Damn it, Jack—I've assembled a regiment the likes of which hasn't been seen in almost twenty years, and if you've any sense at all, you'll make use of us. Our horses and our training give us an enormous advantage on this terrain. We can mobilize and strike at the enemy as easily as this fellow Lawrence seems to be doing in the Arabian desert."

Pershing stared at him for a long moment, then sighed deeply.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ORSON SCOTT CARD

Praise for ENDER'S GAME:

"Intense is the word for Orson Scott Card's ENDER'S GAME.... [An] affecting novel, full of surprises."

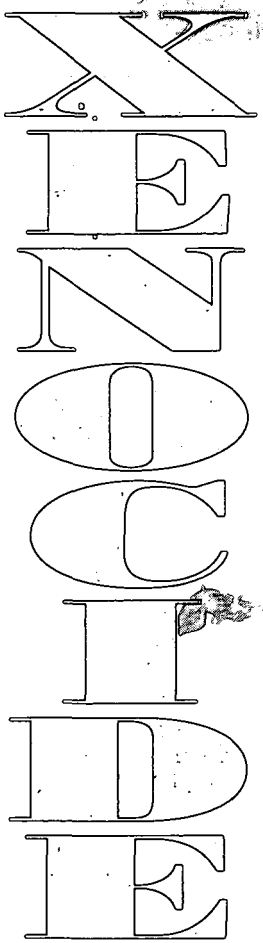
—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Both a gripping tale of adventure in space and a scathing indictment of the militaristic mind."

—*Library Journal*

"...Superb characterization, pacing, and language... a seamless story of compelling power. This is Card at the height of his very considerable powers —a major sf novel by any reasonable standard."

—*Booklist*



Praise for SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD:

"Told with compassion and keen insight, this powerful sequel to *Ender's Game* is highly recommended."

—*Library Journal*

"*Speaker for the Dead* is complex, both in historical perspective and story line. The intricate relationships between the main characters are an integral part of the tale. Card draws us into their lives, giving us insight into their thoughts and feelings and getting us involved in the twists and turns of this very intimate story. It is a great read."

—*U.P.I.*

1985—*ENDER'S GAME*—WINNER OF BOTH THE HUGO- AND NEBULA-AWARDS.
1986—*SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD*—WINNER OF BOTH THE HUGO- AND NEBULA-AWARDS.
NOW, FOR 1991—*XENOCIDE*—THE THIRD BOOK OF ENDER.

TOR®

TOR®

ENDER'S GAME (ISBN 0312-93208-1) AND *SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD* (ISBN 0312-93738-5) WILL RETURN IN HANDSOME HARDCOVER EDITIONS, PRINTED ON ACID-FREE PAPER AND REDESIGNED TO CONFORM IN SIZE WITH *XENOCIDE*.

XENOCIDE (ISBN 0312-85056-5 □ Available in July 1991 □ $21.95
From TOR BOOKS 1991—Our 10th Anniversary Year.

"I can't do it, Mr. President," said Pershing.

"Why not?" demanded Roosevelt.

"The truth? Because of *you*, sir."

"What are you talking about?"

"You've made my position damnably awkward," said Pershing bitterly. "You are an authentic American hero, possibly the first one since Abraham Lincoln. You are as close to being worshiped as a man can be." He paused. "You're a goddamned icon, Mr. Roosevelt."

"What has *that* got to do with anything?"

"I am under direct orders not to allow you to participate in any action that might result in your death." He glared at Roosevelt across the desk. "*Now* do you understand? If I move you to the front, I'll have to surround you with at least three divisions to make sure nothing happens to you—and I'm in no position to spare that many men."

"Who issued that order, Jack?"

"My Commander-in-Chief."

"Woodrow Wilson?"

"That's right. And I'd no more disobey him than I would disobey you if you still held that office." He paused, then spoke again more gently. "You're an old man, sir. Not old by your standards, but too damned old to be leading charges against the Germans. You should be home writing your memoirs and giving speeches and rallying the people to our cause, Mr. President."

"I'm not ready to retire to Sagamore Hill and have my face carved on Mount Rushmore yet," said Roosevelt. "There are battles to be fought and a war to be won."

"Not by you, Mr. President," answered Pershing. "When the enemy is beaten and on the run, I'll bring your regiment up. The press can go crazy photographing you chasing the few German stragglers back to Berlin. But I cannot and will not disobey a direct order from my Commander-in-Chief. Until I can guarantee your safety, you'll stay where you are."

"I see," said Roosevelt, after a moment's silence. "And what if I relinquish my command? Will you utilize my Rough Riders then?"

Pershing shook his head. "I have no use for a bunch of tennis players and college professors who think they can storm across the trenches on their polo ponies," he said firmly. "The only men you have with battle experience are as old as you are." He paused. "Your regiment might be effective if the Apaches ever leave the reservation, but they are ill-prepared for a modern, mechanized war. I hate to be so blunt, but it's the truth, sir."

"You're making a huge mistake, Jack."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're the one who made the mistake, sir, by coming here. It's my job to see that you don't die because of it."

"Damn it, Jack, we could make a difference!"

Pershing paused and stared, not without sympathy, at Roosevelt. "War has changed, Mr. President," he said at last. "No one regiment can make a difference any longer. It's been a long time since Achilles fought Hector outside the walls of Troy."

An orderly entered with a dispatch, and Pershing immediately read and initialed it.

"I don't mean to rush you, sir," he said, getting to his feet, "but I have an urgent meeting to attend."

Roosevelt stood up. "I'm sorry to have bothered you, General."

"I'm still Jack to you, Mr. President," said Pershing. "And it's as your friend Jack that I want to give you one final word of advice."

"Yes?"

"Please, for your own sake and the sake of your men, don't do anything rash."

"Why would I do something rash?" asked Roosevelt innocently.

"Because you wouldn't be Teddy Roosevelt if the thought of ignoring your orders hadn't already crossed your mind," said Pershing.

Roosevelt fought back a grin, shook Pershing's hand, and left without saying another word. The young lieutenant was just outside the door, and escorted him back to where Runs With Deer and Matupu were waiting with the horses.

"Bad news?" asked Runs With Deer, as he studied Roosevelt's face.

"No worse than I had expected."

"Where do we go now?" asked the Indian.

"Back to camp," said Roosevelt firmly. "There's a war to be won, and no college professor from New Jersey is going to keep me from helping to win it!"

"Well, that's the story," said Roosevelt to his assembled officers, after he had laid out the situation to them in the large tent he had reserved for strategy sessions. "Even if I resign my commission and return to America, there is no way that General Pershing will allow you to see any action."

"I knew Black Jack Pershing when he was just a captain," growled Buck O'Neill, one of the original Rough Riders. "Just who the hell does he think he is?"

"He's the supreme commander of the American forces," answered Roosevelt wryly.

"What are we going to do, sir?" asked McCoy. "Surely you don't plan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to just sit back here and then let Pershing move us up when all the fighting's done with?"

"No, I don't," said Roosevelt.

"Let's hear what you got to say, Teddy," said O'Neill.

"The issues at stake in this war haven't changed since I went to see the General," answered Roosevelt. "I plan to harass and harry the enemy to the best of our ability. If need be we will live off the land while utilizing our superior mobility in a number of tactical strikes, and we will do our valiant best to bring this conflict to a successful conclusion."

He paused and looked around at his officers. "I realize that in doing this I am violating my orders, but there are greater principles at stake here. I am flattered that the president thinks I am indispensable to the American public, but our nation is based on the principle that no one man deserves any rights or privileges not offered to all men." He took a deep breath and cleared his throat. "However, since I *am* contravening a direct order, I believe that not only each one of you, but every one of the men as well, should be given the opportunity to withdraw from the Rough Riders. I will force no man to ride against his conscience and his beliefs. I would like you to go out now and put the question to the men; I will wait here for your answer."

To nobody's great surprise, the regiment voted unanimously to ride to glory with Teddy Roosevelt.

3 August, 1917
My Dearest Edith:

As strange as this may seem to you (and it seems surpassingly strange to me), I will soon be a fugitive from justice, opposed not only by the German army but quite possibly by the U.S. military as well.

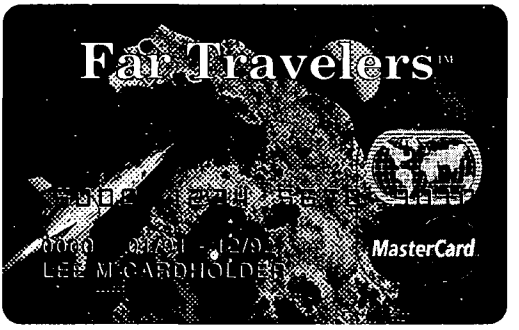
My Rough Riders have embarked upon a bold adventure, contrary to both the wishes and the direct orders of the president of the United States. When I think back to the day he finally approved my request to reassemble the regiment, I cringe with chagrin at my innocence and naïvete; he sent us here only so that I would not have access to the press and he would no longer have to listen to my demands. Far from being permitted to play a leading role in this noblest of battles, my men have been held far behind the front, and Jack Pershing is under orders from Wilson himself not to allow any harm to come to us.

When I learned of this, I put a proposition to my men, and I am extremely proud of their response. To a one, they voted to break camp and ride to the front so as to strike at the heart of the German military machine. By doing so, I am disobeying the orders of my Commander-in-Chief, and because of this somewhat peculiar situation, I doubt that I shall be able to send too many more letters to you until I have helped to end this war.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Your Window to the Future

Apply for the new Far Travelers MasterCard!



"Every time you use The Far Travelers Card a percentage of the amount charged goes to support the activities of the National Space Society at no extra cost to you."
Joel Davis — President, *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction® Magazine.*

Encourage humanity's commitment to the exploration of space.

Use *the* MasterCard for Science Fiction Readers.

No annual fee*

*(for the first year, and later depending upon usage.)

Annual Percentage Rate for Purchases	Variable Rate Information	Grace Period for Repayment of the Balance for Purchases
Variable Rate 16.65%	Your Annual Percentage rate may vary. The Rate is determined by adding 7.9% to the New York Prime Rate as published in the Wall Street Journal on the first Friday of the preceding month.	Not less than 25 days
Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases	**Annual Fee**	**Minimum Finance Charge**
Two-cycle Average Daily Balance Excluding New Purchases	$20.00*	50¢ If it would otherwise be greater than zero and less than 50¢

Other Charges	*There is no Annual Fee for the first year.
Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $15 Cash Advances: 2% (minimum $2, maximum $10) Return Check Fee: $15 Late Payment Fee: 5% of each payment due or $5, whichever is lower	The $20 Annual Fee will be waived in subsequent years for card accounts with total annual purchases in the previous year of at least $6,500.

The information about the costs of the cards described in this application is accurate as of April 1991.
This information may change after that date.
To find out what may have changed, call us at (406) 761-8922 or 1-800-735-5536,
or write to BanCard Corporation of Montana, P.O. Box 5023, Great Falls, Montana 59403-9968.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Far Travelers™ Card

MasterCard®

APPLICANT INFORMATION				001-004-00003
FIRST NAME INITIAL LAST NAME				
DATE OF BIRTH / /	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER – –	HOME PHONE ( ) –		
ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE	YEARS THERE
PREVIOUS ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE	YEARS THERE
PRESENT EMPLOYER		WORK PHONE ( ) –		YEARS THERE
PREVIOUS EMPLOYER (if with present employer less than one year)		WORK PHONE ( ) –		YEARS THERE
GROSS ANNUAL INCOME* $	TOTAL MONTHLY PAYMENTS (INCLUDE HOME, CAR, PERSONAL, CREDIT CARD LOANS, ETC.) $	PREFERRED CREDIT LIMIT $		
NEAREST RELATIVE NOT LIVING WITH ME	RELATIONSHIP	TELEPHONE ( ) –		

CO–APPLICANT INFORMATION				
FIRST NAME INITIAL LAST NAME				
DATE OF BIRTH / /	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER – –	HOME PHONE ( ) –		
ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE	YEARS THERE
PREVIOUS ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE	YEARS THERE
PRESENT EMPLOYER		WORK PHONE ( ) –		YEARS THERE
PREVIOUS EMPLOYER (if with present employer less than one year)		WORK PHONE ( ) –		YEARS THERE
GROSS ANNUAL INCOME* $	TOTAL MONTHLY PAYMENTS (INCLUDE HOME, CAR, PERSONAL, CREDIT CARD LOANS, ETC.) $			

*Your alimony, child support and separate income need not be disclosed if you do not wish to have it considered as a basis for repaying this obligation.

I authorize BanCard Corporation of Montana to check my credit and employment. I agree that I will be subject to the terms and conditions of the Cardholder Agreement sent with the card.

X _____ Applicant's Signature Date

X _____ Co–Applicant's Signature Date

For Bank Use Only	Account Number	Date	No. of Cards	Credit Line	Approved by

Please mail this application or a photocopy to:

BanCard Corporation, P.O. Box 5023, Great Falls, Montana 59403-9968.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At that time, I shall turn myself over to Pershing, or whoever is in charge, and argue my case before whatever tribunal is deemed proper.

However, before that moment occurs, we shall finally see action, bearing the glorious banner of the Stars and Stripes. My men are a finely tuned fighting machine, and I daresay that they will give a splendid account of themselves before the conflict is over. We have not made contact with the enemy yet, nor can I guess where we shall finally meet, but we are primed and eager for our first taste of battle. Our spirit is high, and many of the old-timers spend their hours singing the old battle songs from Cuba. We are all looking forward to a bully battle, and we plan to teach the Hun a lesson he won't soon forget.

Give my love to the children, and when you write to Kermit and Quentin, tell them that their father has every intention of reaching Berlin before they do!

All my love,
Theodore

Roosevelt, who had been busily writing an article on ornithology, looked up from his desk as McCoy entered his tent.

"Well?"

"We think we've found what we've been looking for, Mr. President," said McCoy.

"Excellent!" said Roosevelt, carefully closing his notebook. "Tell me about it."

McCoy spread a map out on the desk.

"Well, the front lines, as you know, are *here,* about fifteen miles to the north of us. The Germans are entrenched *here,* and we haven't been able to move them for almost three weeks." McCoy paused. "The word I get from my old outfit is that the Americans are planning a major push on the German left, right about *here.*"

"When?" demanded Roosevelt.

"At sunrise tomorrow morning."

"Bully!" said Roosevelt. He studied the map for a moment, then looked up. "Where is Jack Pershing?"

"Almost ten miles west and eight miles north of us," answered McCoy. "He's dug in, and from what I hear, he came under pretty heavy mortar fire today. He'll have his hands full without worrying about where an extra regiment of American troops came from."

"Better and better," said Roosevelt. "We not only get to fight, but we may even pull Jack's chestnuts out of the fire." He turned his attention back to the map. "All right," he said, "the Americans will advance along this line. What would you say will be their major obstacle?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You mean besides the mud and the Germans and the mustard gas?" asked McCoy wryly.

"You know what I mean, Frank."

"Well," said McCoy, "there's a small rise here—I'd hardly call it a hill, certainly not like the one we took in Cuba—but it's manned by four machine guns, and it gives the Germans an excellent view of the territory the Americans have got to cross."

"Then that's our objective," said Roosevelt decisively. "If we can capture that hill and knock out the machine guns, we'll have made a positive contribution to the battle that even that Woodrow Wilson will be forced to acknowledge." The famed Roosevelt grin spread across his face. "We'll show him that the dodo may be dead, but the Rough Riders are very much alive." He paused. "Gather the men, Frank. I want to speak to them before we leave."

McCoy did as he was told, and Roosevelt emerged from his tent some ten minutes later to address the assembled Rough Riders.

"Gentlemen," he said, "tomorrow morning we will meet the enemy on the battlefield."

A cheer arose from the ranks.

"It has been suggested that modern warfare deals only in masses and logistics, that there is no room left for heroism, that the only glory remaining to men of action is upon the sporting fields. I tell you that this is a lie. *We matter!* Honor and courage are not outmoded virtues, but are the very ideals that make us great as individuals and as a nation. Tomorrow we will prove it in terms that our detractors and our enemies will both understand." He paused, and then saluted them. "Saddle up—and may God be with us!"

They reached the outskirts of the battlefield, moving silently with hooves and harnesses muffled, just before sunrise. Even McCoy, who had seen action in Mexico, was unprepared for the sight that awaited them.

The mud was littered with corpses as far as the eye could see in the dim light of the false dawn. The odor of death and decay permeated the moist, cold morning air. Thousands of bodies lay there in the pouring rain, many of them grotesquely swollen. Here and there they had virtually exploded, either when punctured by bullets or when the walls of the abdominal cavities collapsed. Attempts had been made during the previous month to drag them back off the battlefield, but there was simply no place left to put them. There was almost total silence, as the men in both trenches began preparing for another day of bloodletting.

Roosevelt reined his horse to a halt and surveyed the carnage. Still more corpses were hung up on barbed wire, and more than a handful of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bodies attached to the wire still moved feebly. The rain pelted down, turning the plain between the enemy trenches into a brown, gooey slop.

"My God, Frank!" murmured Roosevelt.

"It's pretty awful," agreed McCoy.

"This is not what civilized men do to each other," said Roosevelt, stunned by the sight before his eyes. "This isn't war, Frank—it's butchery!"

"It's what war has become."

"How long have these two lines been facing each other?"

"More than a month, sir."

Roosevelt stared, transfixed, at the sea of mud.

"A month to cross a quarter mile of *this*?"

"That's correct, sir."

"How many lives have been lost trying to cross this strip of land?"

McCoy shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe eighty thousand, maybe a little more."

Roosevelt shook his head. "Why, in God's name? Who cares about it? What purpose does it serve?"

McCoy had no answer, and the two men sat in silence for another moment, surveying the battlefield.

"This is madness!" said Roosevelt at last. "Why doesn't Pershing simply march *around* it?"

"That's a question for a general to answer, Mr. President," said McCoy. "Me, I'm just a captain."

"We can't continue to lose American boys for *this!*" said Roosevelt furiously. "Where is that machine gun encampment, Frank?"

McCoy pointed to a small rise about three hundred yards distant.

"And the main German lines?"

"Their first row of trenches are in line with the hill."

"Have we tried to take the hill before?"

"I can't imagine that we haven't, sir," said McCoy. "As long as they control it, they'll mow our men down like sitting ducks in a shooting gallery." He paused. "The problem is the mud. The average infantryman can't reach the hill in less than two minutes, probably closer to three—and until you've seen them in action, you can't believe the damage these guns can do in that amount of time."

"So as long as the hill remains in German hands, this is a war of attrition."

McCoy sighed. "It's been a war of attrition for three years, sir."

Roosevelt sat and stared at the hill for another few minutes, then turned back to McCoy.

"What are our chances, Frank?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

McCoy shrugged. "If it was dry, I'd say we had a chance to take them out. . . ."

"But it's not."

"No, it's not," echoed McCoy.

"Can we do it?"

"I don't know, sir. Certainly not without heavy casualties."

"How heavy?"

"*Very* heavy."

"I need a number," said Roosevelt.

McCoy looked him in the eye. "Ninety percent—if we're lucky."

Roosevelt stared at the hill again. "They predicted fifty percent casualties at San Juan Hill," he said. "We had to charge up a much steeper slope in the face of enemy machine gun fire. Nobody thought we had a chance—but I did it, Frank, and I did it alone. I charged up that hill and knocked out the machine gun nest myself, and then the rest of my men followed me."

"The circumstances were different then, Mr. President," said McCoy. "The terrain offered cover, and solid footing, and you were facing Cuban peasants who had been conscripted into service, not battle-hardened professional German soldiers."

"I know, I know," said Roosevelt. "But if we knock those machine guns out, how many American lives can we save today?"

"I don't know," admitted McCoy. "Maybe ten thousand, maybe none. It's possible that the Germans are dug in so securely that they can beat back any American charge even without the use of those machine guns."

"But at least it would prolong some American lives," persisted Roosevelt.

"By a couple of minutes."

"It would give them a *chance* to reach the German bunkers."

"I don't know."

"More of a chance than if they had to face machine gun fire from the hill."

"What do you want me to say, Mr. President?" asked McCoy. "That if we throw away our lives charging the hill that we'll have done something glorious and affected the outcome of the battle? I just don't know!"

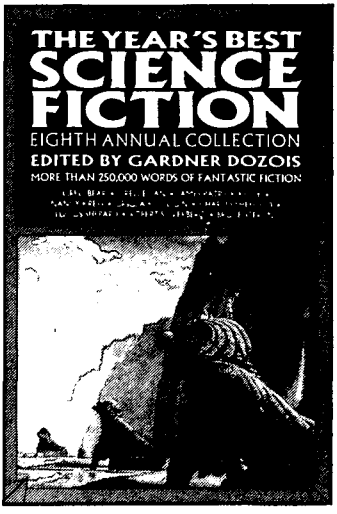
"We came here to help win a war, Frank. Before I send my men into battle, I have to know that it will make a difference."

"I can't give you any guarantees, sir. We came to fight a war, all right. But look around you, Mr. President—*this* isn't the war we came to fight. They've changed the rules on us."

"There are hundreds of thousands of American boys in the trenches who didn't come to fight this kind of war," answered Roosevelt. "In less than an hour, most of them are going to charge across this sea of mud

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This latest in the highly-acclaimed series, the eighth annual collection, features more than 250,000 words of SF by some of the best writers of our times. Two-time Nebula winner Gardner Dozois, editor of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, has compiled a breathtaking collection by such writers as **Ursula K. Le Guin • Joe Haldeman • John Brunner • Robert Silverberg • Bruce Sterling • Kate Wilhelm • Terry Bisson • Connie Willis • Lucius Shepard** • and more. In addition you'll find a thorough summation of the year 1990 in science fiction and a comprehensive list of recommended reading. No wonder readers and reviewers agree: **this is the one book no science fiction reader should be without!**



"More so than any other annual anthology series, Dozois' book represents the current state of the genre and the current progress of its leading writers, as much as it showcases individual stories of high merit."—*Locus*

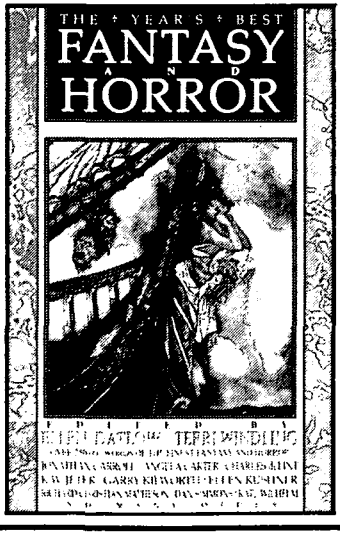
"One of the best buys in the field again this year."
—*Science Fiction Chronicle*

624 pages/$15.95 paperback/$27.95 hardcover

SCIENCE FICTION

THE YEAR'S BEST:

FANTASY & HORROR



The fourth annual collection features a spectacular selection of fantasy and horror writing by the finest writers in the field. Culled from the pages of magazines, anthologies, and small-press publications, the editors have again collected brilliant, gripping tales by such stellar writers as **Jonathan Carroll • Joyce Carol Oates • Peter Straub • John Crowley • R.A. Lafferty • Haruki Murakami • David J. Schow • Ellen Kushner • Lucius Shepard • Jack Womack • Garry Kilworth** • and many others. Boasting more than 200,000 words of fantasy and horror, illuminated with brilliant poems and stories, high fantasy, atmospheric horror, splatterpunk, magic realism, and sparkling examples of the unclassifiable, this is the largest available collection of its kind and no fantasy shelf can be called complete without it.

"This is a gold mine of a book."
—*Thrust Science Fiction and Fantasy*

"Unparalleled....This is a collection to expand your reading tastes if you're at all interested in fantasy or horror."—*Locus*

576 pages/$15.95 paperback/$27.95 hardcover

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS
175 Fifth Ave., New York 10010

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into a barrage of machine gun fire. If we can't shorten the war, then perhaps we can at least lengthen their lives."

"At the cost of our own."

"We are idealists and adventurers, Frank—perhaps the last this world will ever see. We knew what we were coming here to do." He paused. "Those boys are here because of speeches and decisions that politicians have made, myself included. Left to their own devices, they'd go home to be with their families. Left to ours, we'd find another cause to fight for."

"This isn't a cause, Mr. President," said McCoy. "It's a slaughter."

"Then maybe this is where men who want to prevent further slaughter belong," said Roosevelt. He looked up at the sky. "They'll be mobilizing in another half hour, Frank."

"I know, Mr. President."

"If we leave now, if we don't try to take that hill, then Wilson and Pershing were right and I was wrong. The time for heroes is past, and I *am* an anachronism who should be sitting at home in a rocking chair, writing memoirs and exhorting younger men to go to war." He paused, staring at the hill once more. "If we don't do what's required of us this day, we are agreeing with them that we don't matter, that men of courage and ideals can't make a difference. If that's true, there's no sense waiting for a more equitable battle, Frank—we might as well ride south and catch the first boat home."

"That's your decision, Mr. President?" asked McCoy.

"Was there really ever any other option?" replied Roosevelt wryly.

"No, sir," said McCoy. "Not for men like us."

"Thank you for your support, Frank," said Roosevelt, reaching out and laying a heavy hand on McCoy's shoulder. "Prepare the men."

"Yes, sir," said McCoy, saluting and riding back to the main body of the Rough Riders.

"Madness!" muttered Roosevelt, looking out at the bloated corpses. "Utter madness!"

McCoy returned a moment later.

"The men are awaiting your signal, sir," he said.

"Tell them to follow me," said Roosevelt.

"Sir . . . " said McCoy.

"Yes?"

"We would prefer you not lead the charge. The first ranks will face the heaviest bombardment, not only from the hill but also from the cannons behind the bunkers."

"I can't ask my men to do what I myself won't do," said Roosevelt.

"You are too valuable to lose, sir. We plan to attack in three waves. You belong at the back of the third wave, Mr. President."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roosevelt shook his head. "There's nothing up ahead except bullets, Frank, and I've faced bullets before—in the Dakota Bad Lands, in Cuba, in Milwaukee. But if I hang back, if I send my men to do a job I was afraid to do, then I'd have to face *myself*—and as any Democrat will tell you, I'm a lot tougher than any bullet ever made."

"You won't reconsider?" asked McCoy.

"Would you have left your unit and joined the Rough Riders if you thought I might?" asked Roosevelt with a smile.

"No, sir," admitted McCoy. "No, sir, I probably wouldn't have."

Roosevelt shook his hand. "You're a good man, Frank."

"Thank you, Mr. President."

"Are the men ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then," said Roosevelt, turning his horse toward the small rise, "let's do what must be done."

He pulled his rifle out, unlatched the safety catch, and dug his heels into his horse's sides.

Suddenly he was surrounded by the first wave of his own men, all screaming their various war cries in the face of the enemy.

For just a moment there was no response. Then the machine guns began their sweeping fire across the muddy plain. Buck O'Neill was the first to fall, his body riddled with bullets An instant later Runs With Deer screamed in agony as his arm was blown away. Horses had their legs shot from under them, men were blown out of their saddles, limbs flew crazily through the wet morning air, and still the charge continued.

Roosevelt had crossed half the distance when Matupu fell directly in front of him, his head smashed to a pulp. He heard McCoy groan as half a dozen bullets thudded home in his chest, but he looked neither right nor left as his horse leaped over the fallen Maasai's bloody body.

Bullets and cannonballs flew to the right and left of him, in front and behind, and yet miraculously he was unscathed as he reached the final hundred yards. He dared a quick glance around, and saw that he was the sole survivor from the first wave, then heard the screams of the second wave as the machine guns turned on them.

Now he was seventy yards away, now fifty. He yelled a challenge to the Germans, and as he looked into the blinking eye of a machine gun, for one brief, final, glorious instant, it was San Juan Hill all over again.

18 September, 1917

Dispatch from General John J. Pershing to Commander-in-Chief, President Woodrow Wilson.

Sir:

I regret to inform you that Theodore Roosevelt died last Tuesday of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wounds received in battle. He had disobeyed his orders, and led his men in a futile charge against an entrenched German position. His entire regiment, the so-called "Rough Riders," was lost. His death was almost certainly instantaneous, although it was two days before his body could be retrieved from the battlefield.

I shall keep the news of Mr. Roosevelt's death from the press until receiving instructions from you. It is true that he was an anachronism, that he belonged more to the nineteenth century than the twentieth, and yet it is entirely possible that he was the last authentic hero our country shall ever produce. The charge he led was ill-conceived and foolhardy in the extreme, nor did it diminish the length of the conflict by a single day, yet I cannot help but believe that if I had 50,000 men with his courage and spirit, I could bring this war to a swift and satisfactory conclusion by the end of the year.

That Theodore Roosevelt died the death of a fool is beyond question, but I am certain in my heart that with his dying breath he felt he was dying the death of a hero. I await your instructions, and will release whatever version of his death you choose upon hearing from you.

—Gen. John J. Pershing

22 September, 1917

Dispatch from President Woodrow Wilson to General John J. Pershing, Commander of American Forces in Europe.

John:

That man continues to harass me from the grave.

Still, we have had more than enough fools in our history. Therefore, he died a hero.

Just between you and me, the time for heroes is past. I hope with all my heart that he was our last.

—Woodrow Wilson

And he was.●

Customer Service or Subscriber Assistance
Please direct all changes of address
and subscription questions to:
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine
P.O. Box 7058
Red Oak, IA 51591

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE GROUPER'S RIDDLE

The Grouper dreams in tropical seas,
Heavy body, lazy, almost still,
Chameleon of the utmost deeps,
Hermaphrodite, once egg layer,
Now essentially male, he sleeps,
Waking only to wait for food
And haunt the mizzens of rotting hulks.

His mouth perpetually frowns,
Voiceless, no message in his DNA
To predict his ultimate demise.
Rather, he blinks his bulging eyes
And grows ever so slowly toward eternity
Until, twelve feet long and half a ton,
He fears nothing.

Only disease can halt his relentless life,
And when a hapless diver
Tries to engage him
In some important interaction,
The Grouper merely replies
With silent rows
Of backward pointing, needle teeth.

Leave him alone, he seems to say,
To the limits of his bathic life—
The satisfaction of a full belly
And, in the depths of his murky mind,
The singular, repetitive message
Of the forever dream, the answer
To the riddle of his amazing immortality:

"What does the Grouper do
As the ripples of the decades pass?
What does he do to the tides of time
That keeps him from growing old?"
The answer is written in coral shoals,
Imprinted in the sands below—
The Grouper simply regroups.

—Sandra Lindow

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BEE MAN

by Mary Rosenblum

The author tells us this tale is the final piece in her trio of Dryland's stories. By the time she wrote "The Bee Man," she was "beginning to seriously consider the ecological price of dealing with a failing water supply. Agricultural land has already been damaged by saline irrigation water as the aquifers are diminished in the Southwest. The technological potential for genetically engineered saline-tolerant crop plants exists." Ms. Rosenblum doesn't expect to see the Willamette Valley end up as a salt-pan, "but sometimes, I wonder . . ."

art: Broeck Steadman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nita Montoya's brother sold her when she was fifteen—to the Bee Man who came around sometimes to sell honey to the field hands. At least, that's what her other brother, Ignacio, called it. *Selling*. When Ignacio said it, Alberto slapped him and they almost started fighting, even though Ignacio was only two years older than Nita and a lot smaller than Alberto. Mama screamed at them both, and they stopped, but their bitterness scorched Nita, made her want to hide. But there was no place to hide in their tiny farm cabin.

"She's a good girl," Alberto told the Bee Man. "She works as hard as any boy and she minds real good, even if she can't talk."

The Bee Man was old. His curly hair had gray in it, and his long face was lined and folded, brown as old leather. Alberto turned to look at her, and Nita flinched. He was mad. His anger *hurt* her, like the ache in his back hurt her when he came in from the fields, like Ignacio's hating hurt her. Like Mama hurt her. Nita drew a line in the dust with her toe, wishing that she didn't have to feel their anger and their aches. Alberto was mad because the foreman had tried to put his hands under Nita's shirt, back behind the machine sled. Nita rubbed out the line, remembering the time she'd gone to the outhouse late and the foreman had been back there with one of the women. When he'd trapped her behind the machine shed, put his hands on her, his hot sticky excitement had been scary, but it had made Nita's skin prickle with strange feelings.

She'd run away when the foreman touched her, but Alberto had seen them. Now, Alberto was mad.

"You go with the man, Nita," Alberto said to her, too loud and too slow, the way he always talked to her, as if she couldn't hear. "You're going to live with him now." He wasn't looking at her any more. He was looking at the jug of honey in his hands. The honey looked yellow as piss.

"Come on." The Bee Man smiled at Nita. "You carry these, all right?"

Nita took the pole he handed her, balanced it across one shoulder. It was a hollow piece of plastic pipe. More jugs—mostly empty—hung from each end, bowing the pole in front and behind, making it bounce as Nita walked. She followed the Bee Man down the dusty lane that led from the field-hands' cabins to the main road that ran through the big farm. Dust whirled away from their feet, and Nita's shift stuck to her sweaty back. The Bee Man walked slow and he felt . . . quiet. She studied the curve of his shoulders and back, bent beneath his heavy pack. His hair straggled down his neck in loose curls. He felt like the fields, dry and dusty, like the wind that never stopped blowing.

It wasn't a happy feeling and it wasn't a sad feeling. It was just . . . *quiet*. Nita relaxed a little as they walked across the sunbaked valley floor, toward the brown humps of the mountains. The bushes crowded the road on either side of them, their scratchy, upright branches

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

holding in the heat. The valley was flat as a plate, and the salt crept up out of the ground, making white crusts on the bush stems, coating everything with gray powdery dust.

"They used to grow grass here, in the old days," the Bee Man said suddenly. "Not for hay. Just for seeds. It was cooler then. People had so much water that they grew grass in their *yards*, just to walk on! This whole valley was green."

He didn't look at her, just talked. Nita walked a little closer behind him, so she could hear his words.

"This is all tamarisk. Used to be a weed." He flicked the dusty branches of the bushes that reached out above the cracked asphalt of the road. "They engineered it to tolerate salt. So that we can pipe seawater over the mountains from the ocean and save what sweet water we have left for drinking. Never mind what the salt *does* to the land."

He made it sound like the fields weren't a good thing. Mama, Ignacio, and Alberto worked in the fields, weeding the little bushes, cleaning the soaker-hoses, and cutting branches for the grinder. What would you *do* if there weren't any fields? Nita wondered about that. Maybe this man remembered the old days. He didn't look *that* old, though.

Papa had told her stories about the old days, when the riverbeds had been full of water like a cooking pot, when the rains had come soft and gentle and all the time. Nita didn't like to think about Papa. Preoccupied, she nearly poked the Bee Man in the back with her pole as he stopped.

"You stay here," he said as he shrugged out of his big pack. "I'll be right back."

He said the words too loud, like Alberto did, but he smiled at her again. Nita nodded, watching him drape a flimsy white scarf over his head. They were at the edge of the fields now. The empty land rose up in front of them, folded and rocky, streaked brown and dirty gray, dotted with a few dusty trees that still had green leaves. She'd never been beyond the fields before, and the bare land looked gray and empty.

Clumps of spiny thistle, tufted with purple blossoms, clustered at the edge of the field. Nita watched the Bee Man bend over a piece of tree-trunk standing in the shade of a twisted old oak. There weren't any other trees around, and the heat beat at her. A water jug hung from the pack frame. Nita reached for the jug, sneaked a look at the Bee Man.

The air around him shimmered like heatwaves above asphalt, and Nita heard a low hum. It sang peace. It sang a song of fullness, of enough to eat, of comfort and no fear. She put the jug down, took a step closer, eyes on the humming shimmer.

It felt so *peaceful*. She hummed the sound in her throat. What would it be like to *feel* that way? She hummed louder, felt some of the song's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peace seep into her as she crept closer. The Bee Man's head was wrapped in the scarf. It was so fine that Nita could see his face through the folds.

The air around him was full of bees. They landed on his shoulders and on the flimsy cloth, patched his faded shirtsleeves like brown fur, filled the air with their soft comfort-song. Nita watched him reach into the hollow piece of treetrunk. It was full of bees. They crawled across the backs of his hands, flew up to land on his scarf and on his shirt. She'd never seen so many bees in her life—just one or two at a time, crawling around inside the yellow squash blossoms in the little garden they watered with part of their ration, or with water bought at the public meter.

"What are you doing here?" The Bee Man saw her, straightened with a jerk.

Nita flinched at the painful stab of his fright. The bees felt it, too. Their soft song turned harsh, and they swirled up around his head like summer dust.

"Go back to the pack," the Bee Man said sharply. "Right now! Run! Ow!"

He winced as a bee stung him. They were angry now. She hummed louder, trying to block out their shrill, painful note, groping for the tone of comfort. *That* was it—a hair lower. She found the comfort note, sang it, pitching it against the harsh sound. It spread slowly through the swirling cloud of bees, lowering their angry song, gentling it.

Humming, she watched bees land on her bare arms, crawl up the front of her faded shirt. They tickled, but their bodies looked velvety soft. *Peace, comfort,* she hummed, and stroked one of the black-and-brown bodies delicately. A hand brushed the bees gently away, and Nita looked up with a start. She'd almost forgotten the Bee Man.

"Come away, now." He was frowning, but he wasn't mad. "We'll let them settle down," he said.

He was pleased with her. Pleased! Afraid to breathe, afraid she'd shatter this precious moment, Nita followed him back to the pack.

"I'm glad you like bees." The Bee Man smiled at her. "The last kid I hired was scared to death of them."

Nita looked down at the dust as he pulled off his scarf. She wanted to ask him about the bees and their song, but the words stuck in her throat as they always did.

"I'm going to lose this hive." The Bee Man shouldered his pack, his pleased feeling fading. "The tamarisk doesn't need my bees. They come from cell cultures, so they don't have to bloom, and the salt's killed off most of the native plants. I'd move the hive if I had a place for it, but the wildflower bloom in the hills was bad this year."

The dusty wind blew through the Bee Man's words. Nita let him walk

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DO YOU WANT TO BE A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER?

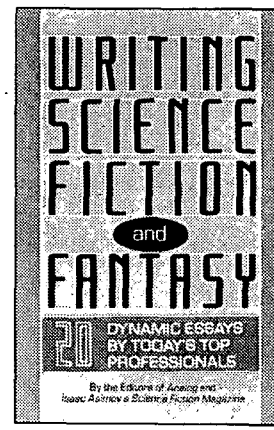
Presenting: WRITING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

From The Editors Of

SCIENCE FICTION **analog** SCIENCE FACT®

and

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE



SAVE OVER 25%

The inside tips and trade secrets of todays foremost professionals: **ISAAC ASIMOV** on *New Writers, Dialog,* and *Revisions* . . . **ROBERT A. HEINLEIN** on *Writing Speculative Fiction.* . . . **POUL ANDERSON** on *Imaginary Worlds,* **CONNIE WILLIS** on *Comedy.* . . . **NORMAN SPINRAD** on *Far, Far Futures.* . . . **JANE YOLEN** on *Fantasy* . . . **JAMES PATRICK KELLY** on *Characterization* . . . **AND MUCH MORE!**

Buy from the editors directly and save over ***25%*** off the ***$18.95*** cover price!

☐ Please send me **WRITING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY,** I've enclosed my check for ***$13.95*** (plus $3.00 for postage and handling)

☐ Please charge my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

My card #_____

Exp. date_____

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE____ ZIP_____

M2WA-4

Mail To: Science Fiction Manual
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, N.J. 07462

Books will be shipped by UPS.
Please allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.

OUTSIDE US & POSS ADD $12.00 PRICE INCLUDES GST
ALSO AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ahead as they climbed into the hills, threading their way between straggling oaks with drooping dusty leaves and tall, tall firs. They walked for the rest of the afternoon. It was a long walk, up into the dry, folded hills. The dust didn't sting up here, but you could still taste salt on your lips. They followed a cracked, curving road that led past a cluster of houses, a church and a boarded-up store, sitting on the edge of a narrow riverbed. The street was empty and Nita didn't feel any people.

"You can get water from some of the deep wells up here in the coast range," the Bee Man said. "So a few people still farm—vegetables for trade, mostly. This is Falls City, where they hold the market on Sundays."

Alberto and Ignacio had come to the market occasionally, and sometimes Mama went too, but Nita had never been. She followed the Bee Man up the dry riverbed; it was hard going now, and she was tired. She couldn't remember walking this far in her whole life. You only went as far as the fields, and then you came home. The riverbed was full of rocks and evening shadows, and they had to climb around an old waterfall. The honey jugs bumped and banged, and the pole snagged on the rocks. The Bee Man held out a hand to her, offering help, but she pretended she didn't see it. If she worked it right, people would forget she was there, and then their feelings wouldn't bother her so much.

"Almost home," the Bee Man said at last. He turned down a narrow streambed that led up into the slope above the larger riverbed.

Small green plants with waxy leaves grew between the rocks under their feet, and a few firs spread shadowy branches above their heads, turning the bed into a tunnel of twilight. Nita paused. Bees? She heard them, saw them streaking into a narrow crack in the rocky fence of the bank. They sang a different song, this time. Louder. Harsher. Curious, Nita went closer, trying to catch the new note.

"Nita, don't!" the Bee Man yelled.

Bees erupted from the crack, whirling toward her like a gust of dark wind. Nita cried out at the first stings. She dropped the jug and tried to run, but the pole tripped her. Bees swarmed over her, burning like fire as she clawed at them.

Then the Bee Man was slapping at them, hissing through his teeth as the bees stung him, too. He wrapped his scarf around her head, yanked her to her feet. Sobbing, Nita stumbled blindly along in his grip. Hot pain spread across her skin as the Bee Man dragged her across the riverbed and up the far bank.

"Keep running!" he panted in her ear. "Just a little more, and it'll be all right. . . . "

Rocks stubbed her toes and Nita fell again. This time the Bee Man didn't make her get up. She curled herself into a ball, face pressed against

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her knees, afraid that she would hear the bees following her, humming loud, humming angry as Mama.

"Here, now. Here, this'll help." The Bee Man was back, unwinding the scarf from her face, coaxing her to sit up.

Nita sucked in her breath as cool wetness soothed the hot burning. Mud? She touched the ocher smears he was dabbing onto her dark skin. It *was* mud, and it helped.

"I'm sorry. I should of warned you about that damn nest, but I didn't think." The Bee Man dipped more mud from the plastic bowl in his hand. "They call them killers for good reason. The whole nest'll come after you, and, if it happens, you run. That's all you can do. If you don't, you can get enough stings to kill you." He grunted. "They came up from South America, a long time ago. From Africa, before that. They do real good in the Dry, but you can't work with 'em, and they don't give much honey, anyway. I would of taken out that nest a long time ago, but it's way back in the rock." He combed a dead bee out of Nita's tangled hair. "You're not swelling anyway, so you'll be all right, I guess."

Nita looked down at the bee, too full of pain to even nod. It didn't *look* any different than the honey bees. Killers, he had called them. That felt right. It matched their ugly, violent song. Nita shivered, fear crawling up her spine. She knew the killers' song, now.

The Bee Man set down the bowl and stood up. Nita watched him disappear into a tent made out of faded green plastic. Rock shelved out above her head to make a shallow cave that breathed cool, damp air on her burning skin. They were on a flat space, like a rocky shelf above the streambed. In the thickening darkness, Nita could barely make out a big, blackened cook-pot on a ring of stones, and a stack of chopped branches. A light went on inside the tent, making the green walls glow.

"Those killer stings hurt. *I* still jump, and I hardly even *notice* the honey bee stings, any more." The Bee Man ducked out of the tent, a jug in one hand and a small solar lantern in the other. "This will make you feel a little better, anyway." He poured pale golden liquid into a plastic cup.

Dry with thirst, Nita gulped at the liquid. It wasn't water. It was sweet, with a faint honey smell, and it felt bubbly on her tongue. She held out her empty cup hopefully.

"Not too much, or you'll have a headache in the morning. This stuff has some kick to it." He filled her cup half full of the bubbly honey-water. "There's plenty of water. Bees showed me a little seep-spring back in the rock." He nodded at the cool darkness beneath the rock overhang. "There's some bread and dried fruit in that basket. Not fancy, but edible. I was going to hire another boy at the market," the Bee Man said slowly. "Alberto asked me to take you, instead."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He was afraid, she realized suddenly. Of *her*? Nita swirled the last of the honey-water in her cup, frowning a little. Why should this man, taller than Alberto, be afraid of *her*?

"There's water in that jug, and you can use this sleeping bag." The Bee Man stood suddenly and picked up the honey-water jug. "Don't wander off, okay? You get lost, you can die of thirst, even this early in the year." He paused in the doorway of the tent. "Damn it, Alberto, we're even!" he said to the gathering darkness. "I'm never going to live *this* down."

He was afraid, *afraid*. What had he meant, anyway? Nita crossed her arms against the first hint of evening chill, pressing her forearms against the new, tender swell of her breasts. Her body felt strange, as if it was changing, as if it wasn't really *hers* anymore. The Bee Man's scared feeling had to do with that. It had a prickly edge that made Nita think of Alberto, when he and Theresa Santorres went for their evening walks with their arms around each other.

Nita wriggled into the sleeping bag. She didn't want any food. The honey water had filled her stomach and softened the worst of the pain. The Bee Man moved around in the tent, talking to himself, a few low words she couldn't quite make out. It was getting cold, like it always did at night. She pulled the thick fabric of the bag up over her shoulders. It smelled like the Bee Man, like honey and sweat and dust.

It smelled *strange*. She sniffed the dry, night air, missing the familiar smell of the crowded cabin, in spite of the hurting anger that filled it. They had lived there almost as long as she could remember. Since Papa died.

I'll kill the bastard, next time he touches her, Alberto had snarled.

And they'll hang you! You're gonna get us all fired, and what will we do then? Mama had said that, arguing with Alberto, hissing and angry, after they thought she was asleep. It had been *Mama* who had made Alberto ask the Bee Man to take her. A hard lump closed her throat, and Nita made a small, choked sound that tried to turn into a sob.

"You hurting?"

She had forgotten his presence, and the Bee Man's touch made Nita jump.

"Easy, now. Gently. Bad dreams, maybe?" He stroked her tangled hair hesitantly. "Things can look pretty dark, your first night away from your folks," he said, and he felt like he was remembering. "We'll get along fine," he said as he got to his feet. "If you have any more bad dreams, you call me, hear?"

Nita nodded. He didn't feel so scared, now. He felt peaceful, like the bees. She fell asleep, comforted by his quiet song.

* * *

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OVER 50% OFF DURING OUR FIRST ANTHOLOGY WAREHOUSE SALE!

Our warehouse is full -- full of classic science fiction anthologies from **Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact and Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazines** We need to make room for new books -- that's why we're having our first anthology warehouse sale. For only $19.95 plus postage and handling, we will send you an assortment of 10 classic science fiction anthologies. That's less than $2.00 a book and less than half the original price.

Please send your check or money order (no COD's please) to:

Anthology Warehouse Sale
Davis Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, NJ 07462

Please send me

___ An assortment of 10 classic science fiction anthologies ($19.95 plus $3.00 postage and handling)

Please send to:

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ST_____Zip_____

While we cannot accommodate requests for specific anthologies, we guarantee that you will be delighted with your surprise assortment. Also, at this great price, these anthologies will make wonderful gifts for your science-fiction-loving friends.

Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Available only in U.S. M2GA-3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Bee Man woke her before dawn. They left the narrow streambed and climbed up into the dry hills, their shadows stretching ahead of them, thin and spindly on the dusty ground.

"We'll gather firewood later." The Bee Man broke a limb from a fir with a dry, brittle snap. "I don't know how much longer the forest's going to last. It's too dry for seedlings to make it, and the old trees keep dying off. At least the land's still *alive* up here. Flowers still bloom. Stuff grows along the bottoms of the old streambeds and in the low places here a little water seeps up. We're killing the land, down in the valley," he said. "If the rains came back tomorrow, it would still be a desert down there."

Nita looked at the dying trees. The Bee Man's words blew through her, dry and dusty as the wind, full of gray shadows. She hadn't ever thought of the land as something that could be alive or dead. Land was just . . . land. Dust or rock or bushes. Nita stopped. Two bees crawled over a small spike of fuzzy purple flowerlets that grew from a crack in a rock. Out here, all by themselves, the bees' song was faint and hard to hear, but it comforted her. Nita scooped them gently from the flower. They buzzed in her closed hand, confused, not angry yet, searching for the vanished sunlight.

"I thought you'd be scared, after yesterday." The Bee Man looked over her shoulder.

He was pleased with her again. His pleasure warmed Nita, drove away the gray chill of his talk about the dying land. Nita opened her hands and the bees zoomed away.

"There's a wild nest at the top of this slope," the Bee Man said. "I figure we might as well take it, now that the honey-bloom's over." He pulled two of the flimsy scarves from his pack, handed her one. "You always wear this veil, hear? " He draped it over her head, tucked it carefully into the neck of her shift. "Stings on your arms hurt. But you get one too close to your eye and you can go blind."

The cloth made it hard to see, but Nita could hear the bees' song as they got close. They darted in and out of a broken stump, singing contentment. She sang with them as the Bee Man built a small fire where the smoke would drift over the nest. The bees swirled up, confused by the smoke, angry as the Bee Man chopped into their dead treetrunk home. Nita hummed the harsh note, changing it, soothing the hive's distress until the comfort-hum wrapped her, thick as the warm honey-smell rising from the folded layers of golden comb inside the trunk. Fascinated, she leaned over the opened nest. Pulpy white larva filled some of the cells and others were capped over, hiding pale, half-formed bees.

"I hate to strip the nests like this, leave them to starve." The Bee Man

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sighed as he brushed bees from a sticky slab of comb and sealed it into one of the plastic pails they'd brought with them.

So this nest would die? Nita stared at the shattered trunk. Brown bits of broken comb and golden honey stuck to the splintered wood and the bees settled on their ruined nest in a dark layer. Their song would end, because she and the Bee Man had smashed through the wood and taken the comb? When the Bee Man touched her shoulder, Nita jerked away from him.

"Nita?" The Bee Man followed her into the thin shade of a dying pine. "What's wrong?"

Nita shook her head, wanting to tell him that it was wrong, that the bees' song shouldn't die. The words wouldn't come. They stuck in her throat, hard and hurting. A bee landed on her hand, sipping at the sticky honey that colored her skin. Nita closed her hand over it, crushed it. Slowly, she opened her hand, dropped the bee into the dust at the Bee Man's feet.

The Bee Man sighed. "That nest would have starved out before the next rainy season. It wasn't big enough to make it. I take their honey so that we can eat." He stared down the slope of the hillside. "Down in the valley, we grind up those test-tube bushes, digest them into sugars and grow wheat cells or soybean cells or even orange juice-sacs in tanks. So we eat and we survive, but nothing else can grow down there. Just bushes. We can never go back to the way it was. We're killing the land, but that's the price. We got to pay it." He shook his head bitterly. "You got to keep running, to stay ahead of the Dry."

Like you had to run from the killers? It hurt *him* to take the wild nest, too. He loved the bees. Nita reached out suddenly and touched his hand.

He jumped a little, as if she'd pinched him, but then he smiled at her. "Let's take what we've got and call it a day," he said.

They went out every day to harvest a careful share of comb from the Bee Man's hives and to strip the small, wild nests they found. The sparse flowers had dried up in the hot sun that seemed to get hotter every day, and there wouldn't be much more honey until next year, he told her.

"I've never seen anyone handle bees like you," the Bee Man said more than once. "I wish I had your talent with them."

He was pleased with her.

When they took the wild nests, Nita sang them a gentle song that was full of the Bee Man's sadness at taking their honey, and the bees settled onto their comb in a dark, quiet layer.

The Bee Man talked to her. He told her how the bees lived, how a worker danced to show the other bees where flowers grew, and how the hive knew when to grow a new queen. He taught her how to live with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the bees, how to melt comb into liquid honey and cakes of wax, how to let the bees show her the tiny water seeps, how to survive in the dry hills.

He told her the names of the flowers: yellow bells and shooting stars down in the crevices, where water seeped up from the winter rains; lupine and desert parsley up high, where it was drier; fescue and wheat grass in tough, dusty clumps up on the ridges, where the trees still cast a little shade. He didn't feel scared any more, and that pleased Nita. He felt warm inside, peaceful as bee song.

His song and the bee song blended, seeping through the years of silence that filled her up, like water soaking into a field. When she was little, before Papa died, she had talked. Nita listened to the Bee Man's words and wanted to tell him how the bees sounded. He loved the bees, but he didn't *hear* them—she was sure of it, and his not-hearing surprised Nita.

But the words still wouldn't come.

One afternoon, they walked clear down to the edge of the fields to check on the tree-trunk hive where they'd stopped on Nita's first day with the Bee Man. The hive was gone, vanished in plowed brown dirt and the dusty green tufts of newly planted bushes. Soaker hoses gleamed in the furrows like basking snakes.

"They just ran right over it!" The Bee Man shaded his eyes, squinting against the harsh light. "I should've moved it, never mind whether there were enough flowers up there for them. Too late, now."

He didn't talk much as they walked back up to the camp. His shoulders drooped and his toes dragged as he walked, raising puffs of salty dust that trailed away on the hot wind.

That evening, they melted the week's small take of comb. Nita strained out dead bees and larvae, watching foam and liquid wax swirl on the surface of the simmering honey. The Bee Man was still sad, and she sat down beside him, close enough to feel the warmth from his arm against hers. He looked at her as she touched his hand, and smiled, blinking a little, as if he'd been thinking about something else and had forgotten that she was there.

"The fields keep catching up to me," he told her. "Stick the plants in the ground and kill the land with salt. I don't know." He stared into the red glow of the coals beneath the iron pot. "It scares me, what we're doing to the land. I keep moving on, but it's always right behind me. The Dry, the salty fields. It doesn't pay to look back." He rubbed his face.

"My father was a hard man," he said. "There was only *his* way to do things, so I took off, when I was about your age. I was lucky. I ran into an old beekeeper, who taught me about bees. After awhile, my father didn't seem so impossible anymore, so I went back." He laughed, a short

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bitter note that made Nita wince. "They were *gone*—Dad, Mom, everyone. Everyone gone. The Dry had moved in, eaten up the fields, filled the streets with dust. I don't know what happened to my folks. Someone told me that they went back East to find a cousin, and someone else told me that they went to Portland. I never found them. Maybe they're dead." He shook his head slowly. "It doesn't pay to care too much. One day you come back, and everything's gone. The bushes have eaten up the land, or the Dry's moved in and buried everything in dust. Everything's gone."

Nita took his hand in hers, wanting to tell him that the bushes and the Dry were just *things*—just salt and plants and dust—not killers who could chase you. He started to pull his hand away, then closed his fingers around hers, tight enough to hurt.

"You're a good listener." He got stiffly to his feet and lifted the honey pot from the fire. "I thought I was doing Alberto a big favor by taking you on, ruining my reputation in the bargain. I guess my reputation's still shot," he said, and laughed.

Nita didn't understand, but she smiled too, because he was warm inside again, like bee song.

Nita woke in darkness that night, struggling up from nightmare to the dry rumble of thunder higher in the mountains. Lightning flickered across the horizon and Nita clutched the sleeping bag around her. Thunder made her remember gunshots. They had carried guns in their hands, the two men who had climbed out of the battered truck in front of their house, so long ago. Squatting in the dust, playing with pebbles in a plastic cup, Nita had looked up at them, curious, not scared yet. Papa was right behind her, bringing water in for dinner.

Run, Sam! Mama had screamed from the porch. *Corre!*

Thunder boomed again and Nita sat up with a gasp. Cold wind gusted through the camp, shaking the tent, and the thunder cracked again. Hard drops stung Nita's arms and face. Rain? She stumbled to her feet, but already the shower had moved on, riding the cold wind down the streambed. Lightning glared, searing Nita's eyes with the stark image of the tent, the woodpile, and the pot of cooling honey. Then the darkness rushed in again, thick as dirt on a grave, pressing down on her, smothering her. Shivering, Nita slipped into the tent.

The air smelled like plastic, honey, and sweat; thick and comforting. It smelled like the Bee Man. He lay on his side, wrapped in a tangled quilt. The soft rasp of his breathing filled the tent, and he stirred, murmuring in his sleep as Nita curled up beside him. The thunder rumbled again, but it didn't scare her this time. Maybe it was raining, somewhere. Nita closed her eyes and fell asleep to the soft murmur of the Bee Man's dreams.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

* * *

In the morning, Nita wakened with the Bee Man's arms around her. His breath tickled her neck and the warmth of his body against her back made her breasts feel tight and tender. She wriggled closer against him, felt him wake up.

He murmured something, still half asleep, and his arms tightened around her. Nita felt the stir of his desire—like Alberto and Theresa—felt an echo in her own flesh. It took her by surprise, that feeling, made her skin go cold and then hot. She pressed back against his warmth, full of a strange ache that came from everywhere and nowhere, centering between her legs like a second heartbeat.

The Bee Man's eyes snapped open and he sat up, pushing roughly away from her. "What are you doing here?" he asked her in a harsh, funny voice.

Scared. He hadn't felt scared like this for a long time. Nita scrambled to her feet. He was staring at her, frowning, all muddy and mixed-up inside, like a pan of wash water after the whole family has used it.

"It's all right." He forced a laugh. "You just . . . surprised me, that's all." He stared at her for a long moment, then began to talk again, too fast: "This is market day, remember? We're almost out of food, so we'd better get started if we want to get there before the best stuff is gone." He stopped, looked at her again. "It's all right," he said.

Nita ducked quickly outside.

It wasn't all right. The Bee Man's fear clogged the air as he strung the full honey jugs together and loaded cakes of wax into the pack. He didn't look at her, didn't talk much. Nita kept her eyes on the ground as they made their way down the riverbed to town, hurt by his feelings, unable to shut them out. She didn't understand it, didn't know what she had done to scare him.

She *felt* the market as they climbed out of the riverbed, a babble of feelings like people shouting all at once inside her head. Alberto had never offered to take her along when he went, and Nita was glad. Ramshackle booths roofed with frayed and faded plastic crowded the parking lot of the old high school. The Bee Man's muddy fear was almost lost in the clamor of so many people. Nita stayed close behind him as they threaded their way between the piles of greens and carrots, old clothes, oily machine parts, and bits of electronics that formed the dusty aisles. If she closed her eyes, she would be lost, drowned in the blare of noise.

They unloaded their packs, set out the cakes of wax and the jugs of honey at a corner of the old gray school building. Nita squatted with her back against the wall while the Bee Man traded honey and wax for hard bread, dried fruit, and canned food, or for grimy government scrip that you could use to buy water, or spend at a government store. People called

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Bee Man David. They laughed and joked with him, while their eyes slid sideways to look at Nita. They all looked at her. Some of them looked at her body, all hungry. Others looked from her to the Bee Man and got mad, like Alberto had gotten mad at the foreman. Nita hunched against the wall, dizzy and trapped.

The Bee Man didn't look at her. It was as if he had forgotten that she was there, or as if he didn't want to remember. Nita closed her burning eyes, trying to shut out the stares and the crowd noise. When she opened them again, Alberto was standing in front of the neatly lined-up honey jugs. "Hello, Nita," he said in his too-loud, too-careful tone.

Nita looked past his thick shoulders. Mama was walking up the crowded aisle.

"How are you getting along?" Alberto was asking the Bee Man. "I haven't seen you for awhile."

"Okay." The Bee Man turned a jug of golden honey slowly between his hands. "But I'm thinking about moving on again, so I guess Nita ought to go back home with you."

Nita stared at him, Mama forgotten for the moment, stunned by his words. He *wanted* her to go, wanted it with an intensity that took Nita's breath away, made her feel sick and empty inside. Nita's lips moved, silently shaping the words to ask him *why. Why?*

"You see?" Alberto turned to Mama, his anger flaring. "I told you this wasn't going to work."

"It's not Nita's fault," the Bee Man said. "It's nothing she did or didn't do." He looked past Alberto, straight at Mama. "She's just a kid. You take her home, and you keep her there."

"Don't you talk like that to me!" Mama shouldered past Alberto. "You think I don't know what you're saying? You think I just kicked my daughter out, sent her out to whore, maybe? Well, you think about what it's like for *us,* mister. If we get kicked off the farm, where do we *go?* To one of the camps in Salem or Portland, live on hand-outs with the no-goods and the drifters? What do we *do*? Alberto said you're a nice man, that you'd take her." She clenched her fists, glared at the Bee Man. "You want to blame someone, you blame her father—you blame *Sam.* We had a good place, a good farm. It wasn't much, but we took care of ourselves." Her voice trembled.

"He left me with the children to feed. So, now we got to scratch in the dust, bow to some strutting little rooster of a foreman who sniffs around my daughter like a dog after a bitch in heat! You want to blame someone, you blame *Sam.* Not *me.* Not my son!" She spun on her heel and stalked away, pulling her sun-scarf up over her gray hair.

"I apologize," Alberto said between clenched teeth. He had gone pale

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

under his weathered tan. "I apologize for my mother. Come on, Nita." His hand closed hard on her arm.

"Wait a minute." The Bee Man caught Alberto's wrist, cold inside. "What happened to Nita? Why can't she talk?"

"She just *stopped*." Alberto looked away. "She looks like Papa," he said. "It's scary, how much she looks like Papa." His face twisted. "Mama didn't mean that Papa walked out on us. It wasn't like that at all. Papa was organizing a water strike, up around The Dalles. Two men drove up to the house one day and shot him. Just shot him down, in cold blood. Nita was right there. She saw it all."

Run! Mama had screamed. But he hadn't run.

The Bee Man was mad, now. Not scared any more. *Mad.* Like Alberto. Like Mama.

Nita twisted out of Alberto's lax grip and ran. The Bee Man shouted something, but she closed her ears to it, dodged around a pile of vegetables. Green squashes went flying and a woman screeched at her. Nita ducked her head as she darted through the forest of shoulders and hips, pursued by flashes of surprise and irritation. The Bee Man didn't want her any more than Alberto and Mama did. Nita's eyes ached as she ran, dry as the riverbed.

The Bee Man followed her. In the breathless heat of late afternoon, Nita heard him call her name as she climbed up a narrow, twisting creekbed high in the folded mountains. Too late, she looked back and saw the footprint she had left in a damp patch of creekbed clay. The thunder that had awakened her last night had meant rain somewhere higher on the slopes, and the runoff had come, quick and violent, down this bed.

She hadn't thought that he would follow her. Nita shrugged her small pack higher on her shoulder and scrambled upward, toward the rim of the creekbed and drier ground. The full water jug that she had taken banged her shoulder painfully. He called to her again, his voice hoarse, as if he had been shouting for a long time.

"Nita? Come *back*! You can't just run away like this. You'll die out here!"

Not true. Nita ducked down into the hollow left by the roots of a wind-felled tree. The tilted mass of roots and sunbaked dirt roofed the torn earth, and she crouched in the cool shadow, catching her breath. She would live with the bees. The Bee Man had showed her how. The bees would find water for her. They would sing to her with the sound of the Bee Man's peace. Nita swallowed, her throat tight, peeking down into the creekbed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He wasn't down in the creekbed. He had climbed the bank, too, appearing only a dozen yards away, circling around a rocky outcrop. Nita squeezed deeper into her hiding place, holding her breath.

"Nita?" He cupped his hands around his mouth, looking up the creekbed as he shouted. "Damn it, Nita. Don't *do* this."

Anger.

It wasn't *his* anger that she was hearing. Nita's arms prickled with the memory of burning stings. Killers. Afraid to move, she peeked between the twisted roots of the old tree. There they were—a little farther along the side of the streambed. Nita's heart beat faster at the sight of the bees darting in and out of a broken treetrunk. If she had gone on a little longer, she would have walked right into them.

"Nita?"

She flinched, heart leaping. He was right beside her, on the other side of the roots. Nita squeezed her eyes closed, trying to maker herself small, trying to become invisible, like she'd done in the cabin, trying to hide from Mama, and later, Alberto.

The Bee Man wasn't mad anymore, but he was still scared. Nita opened her eyes a crack. *Papa* had been scared like this, the day the men had come. *Run!* Mama had screamed, but he *hadn't* run. He had looked at Nita, afraid, afraid for her, had scooped her up, tossed her behind the old pickup, where the men with the guns couldn't see her. Then he had stood up, tall and straight.

The Bee Man hadn't seen her. He had walked past her hiding place, was starting to climb down the side of the creekbed. Nita sucked in her breath, fear squeezing her. Rocks and pebbles, loosened by his feet, bounced down the slope. A few of them hit the killers' treetrunk. Their song rose a notch, and a small cloud of bees swirled into the air. The Bee Man saw them.

His head turned, but he didn't stop. He couldn't hear their song. He didn't know that they were killers. She scrambled to her feet, her head full of their harsh warning. In a moment, he would be too close.

You can die from too many stings, he had told her. "Stop," Nita whispered, but he didn't hear. More bees swirled into the air, humming anger, humming death. "*Stop!*" she screamed.

He heard her, twisted around, his surprise flaring bright as lightning. A rock slid out from beneath his foot, and he staggered, struggling to stay on his feet. More rocks slid and he gave a cry, falling backward, rolling down the slope in a shower of dirt to slam into the killers' tree trunk.

The killers boiled out of their nest. Nita cringed at their harsh song. All you could do was run, he had said.

"Run," she screamed. "*Corre!*"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hands covering his face, the Bee Man tried to get to his feet. He fell again and started crawling away from the nest, too slow, too slow, yelling something as the bees swarmed over him.

The stings hurt him. It had hurt Papa to die.

Nita dropped her pack and scrambled down the slope. A killer stung her face. Their harsh song hammered at her and they settled on her, whining rage, stinging, stinging. Nita stumbled, clawing at bees on her face, slapping at them, struggling with her fear. She couldn't help him, could only run.

Run, Mama had screamed. *Why didn't you run? I hate you! I hate you for dying. . . .*

Like Papa, the Bee Man would die.

"I hate you!" Nita screamed with Mama's voice, and rage flared up inside her, hot as flame. *I hate you!* Fists clenched at her sides, barely feeling the stings, she sang it with the killers, louder and stronger, until her song was the killers', until they hummed her note.

Slowly, reluctantly almost, the dark cloud of killers lifted, thinned away, back to their tree trunk. Nita scrambled down the slope. The Bee Man lay curled up in the dust and she clutched him, terrified that he wouldn't move, that he would lie still and silent under her hands, like Papa had. She gasped in relief as he sat up, clutching at his leg.

"My ankle," he gasped. "I thought . . . I hope it's just twisted. Nita?" He wiped sweat out of his eyes, looked up at the nest. "How did you *do* that? How did you drive them away?"

Nita licked her lips, struggling with the stony words. "I . . . hear their song," she whispered. "I . . . sang with them."

"You *hear* them?"

Abruptly, Nita leaned forward, kissed the Bee Man on the lips. For a moment, he crushed her against him, fingers digging hard into her back.

"Don't." He pushed her away.

"You're scared," Nita whispered. "Of *me.*"

"I'm not . . . he began, then stopped. "Tell me about *hearing,"* he asked her in a very quiet voice. "Do you *hear* people? Like you hear the bees?"

"You were mad at me because I didn't go with Alberto."

"I'm not . . . oh, hell, yes, I was angry. But not at you. Not at you, Nita." He reached out suddenly, stroked her tangled hair back from her face. "Is that how it is for you? You know what people are feeling, but not *why?* Oh God," he whispered, "Nita, is *that* why you don't talk?"

Nita stared down at the dust between her knees. *I hate you!* Mama had screamed, kneeling over Papa. Instead of running, he had died making sure that Nita was safe. His blood had looked so red. Some of it had splashed onto the front of Nita's shift, bright as flowers. *I hate you!* Nita heard it again, every time Mama looked at her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I guess I was angry at myself," the Bee Man said. "I knew what people were saying about you living up here with me. I don't give a damn what anyone says, but I didn't know . . . how I was going to start *feeling*. You can't care too much." He stared down the dry creekbed, his face folded into harsh lines. "You can't afford to."

So scared. Of her, a fifteen-year-old girl? Nita sighed, feeling hollow inside, a little sick in the wake of her killer-song rage. Mama's anger? Or had the harsh song been hers, too? Nita touched her face, the face that reminded Alberto—and Mama—of Papa, felt dust and tears beneath her fingers. "I was going to live with the bees," she said. "By myself."

He was struggling with his fear. Nita waited, all still inside, like an empty hive.

The Bee Man took a long, slow breath. "It scares me to care about you. I'm forty and you're just a kid, and that scares me, too," he said. "But you know that, don't you?"

Fear and desire, and, under it all, beesong peace, like a layer of golden honey. A stalk of tiny, white blossoms poked up from the rocks at Nita's feet; shooting stars, coaxed into bloom by the shower. Nita bent and picked it. Up on the bank, the killers sang their harsh song and she shivered, tasting her own fear. "It's all right to be scared," she said. "You don't have to run away."

"It's a hell of a lot safer to run," the Bee Man said, but he took the stem of flowers from her and tucked it into her hair. "Will you tell me what the bees sound like?" he asked her softly.

"I will," she said, and took his hand.

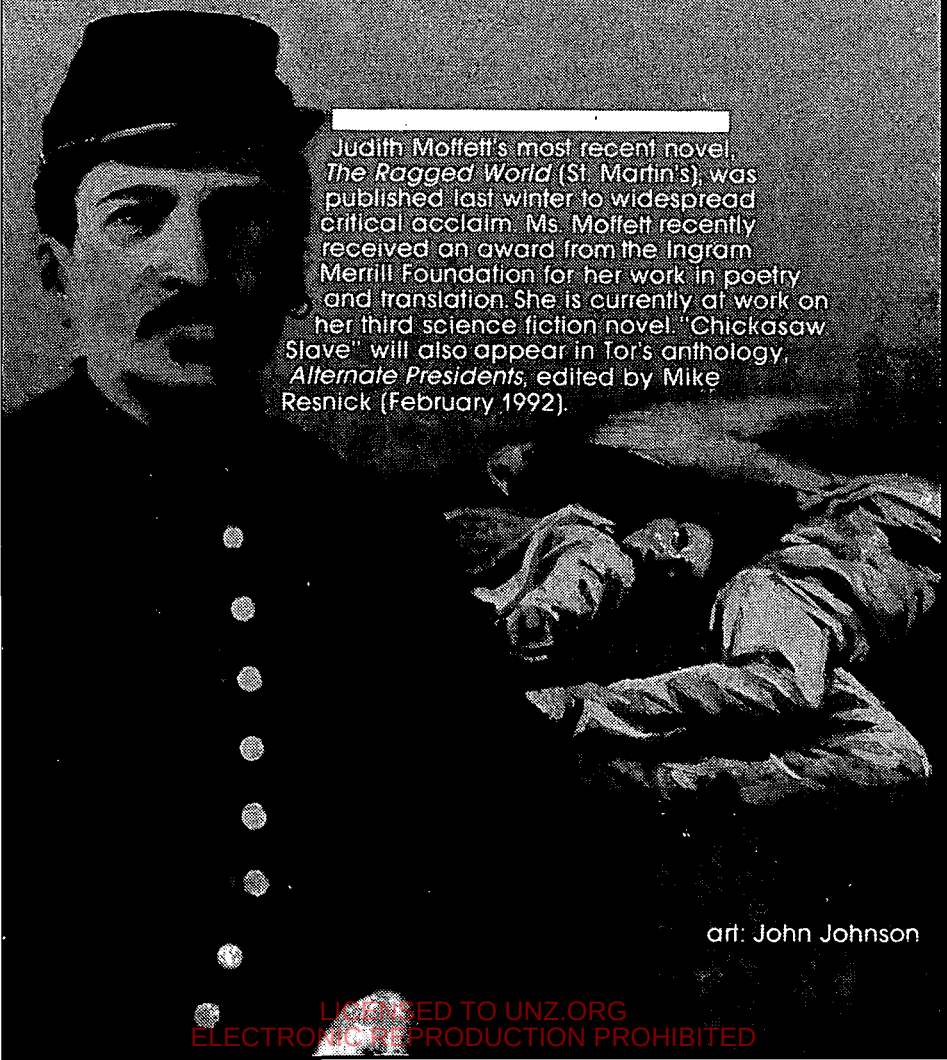
This time, he didn't pull away.●

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO ENZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHICKASAW SLAVE

by Judith Moffett



Judith Moffett's most recent novel, *The Ragged World* (St. Martin's), was published last winter to widespread critical acclaim. Ms. Moffett recently received an award from the Ingram Merrill Foundation for her work in poetry and translation. She is currently at work on her third science fiction novel. "Chickasaw Slave" will also appear in Tor's anthology, *Alternate Presidents*, edited by Mike Resnick (February 1992).

art: John Johnson

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lexington, Kentucky
July 17, 1852

Madam:

I regret to inform you that your fiancé, Sgt. Levi Colbert, was killed in action on the 13th of July, while attempting to storm the heights of the north bluff of the Kentucky River, which were held by the troops of Genl. Winfield Scott. He was shot in the head and died instantly. He served bravely in this regiment and was liked and admired by all. Sgt. Colbert is the only Indian I ever knew personally. He was a fine man, and I feel privileged to have been his commanding officer.

Sgt. Colbert's effects will be forwarded in due course. An envelope, addressed to you, was found on his body; I take the liberty of enclosing it herewith. The blood that stains it is his own.

May it comfort you in your great sorrow to know, that our victory over the enemy at Lawrenceburg, in the attaining of which your fiancé and so many others made the ultimate sacrifice, ensures that our sovereign Confederacy will take its rightful place among the nations of the world. This morning in Lexington General Scott surrendered to General Lee. The War is over.

My deepest sympathy to you.

I remain, Madam,

Yours faithfully,
George Pickett, Capt.,
"B" Company,
Seventh Tennessee Volunteers

Inside the bloodstained envelope:

Lawrenceburg, Kentucky
12 July 1852

My Dearest Rachel,

It is now long past midnight, and I am very tired. We marched all day yesterday and today, from near a little village called Simpsonville, east of Louisville, here to Lawrenceburg in Anderson County—a distance of some fifty or sixty miles—sleeping rough in a pasture last night and pushing on this morning at first light. About all I'm able to recall clearly of yesterday is *mud* and *rain*. Today was mostly fine weather, but we had our work cut out for us finding a place to camp that wasn't a quagmire from all the rain that fell yesterday and the day before.

Lawrenceburg is a Kentucky River town—high bluffs—a blown-up railroad bridge—and about a million Yanks across the river; I can see

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their fires, just as I know they can see the one by whose light I write this, and know they are thinking about the battle to come, just as I am. The high bluffs on both sides of the river make admirable defensive positions, we can keep the big guns booming back and forth for a time, but sooner or later one side will have to try to cross over and charge the other, straight up into those guns. If my regiment is ordered into such a charge, this letter may well be the last I am ever able to write. God knows whether you will receive it.

It begins to seem as if the War may about be over, and that the Confederate States of America may soon be a reality. General Lee is said to believe that one more decisive victory is all that is needed. God grant the morrow will give us that victory.

We outnumber the Yankees this time, and we all know Marse Robert can outfox Genl. Scott with one hand tied behind him. So I may see you all again very soon.

Yet tonight I feel compelled to address you, not only—as ever—to address that which is most dear to me upon the eve of battle, but because I wish to entrust now to your keeping an account, herewith enclosed, of something both extraordinary and of far-reaching consequence—something scarcely thought of for years, yet lately called back to mind, that occurred when I was but a boy.

The account I speak of was written for you, it was of you I thought as I set it down—yet I wish and request that you may keep it for me with the seal unbroken until my return. Or should it not be granted to me to survive this War, then I desire you to read and dispose of it as you think best. I believe you will find it a remarkable tale; but whether better published or concealed you must determine for yourself; I trust entirely to your judgment in the matter.

Rachel, you and I have been too briefly acquainted, and our circumstances throughout that little time too trying, for you to know much more about me than the obvious fact that the biggest number of my ancestors were Indians—a fact stamped upon my countenance where all may see it. I fear—nay, I am certain—that the story told herein will reveal to you certain elements of my family and personal history which can scarcely fail to distress you.

Not for worlds would I injure you; yet I have told the tale after all, albeit with much agitation of mind. The reason is this: that the turmoil which has accompanied me since Cincinnati, together with the sense of the nearness of death which is with me always now, have impelled me to it. And I count on your good sense, and your regard for me, to bear you up, whatever fate befalls me.

God bless you, my darling. I long to see you. My fondest love to you. Pray convey my kind regards to your mother and sisters.

Levi Colbert

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The document which follows was found folded about the letter:

My mother was a Chickasaw full-blood called Ish-te-cho-cultha. She was a kind woman, and made for another sort of life than the life my father chose for them both, namely that of keeping hogs and raising cotton, but she never complained, unless her refusal to learn English was a sort of indirect complaint. My father talked good English; he was a mixed-blood, though I never knew much about his parentage, owing to the circumstance that his father and mother had both been dead for years at the time he married my mother. I do know that he was in some fashion related to the Colberts, a large and powerful family of mixed-bloods all descended from one James Colbert, a Scot, who had married into the tribe sometime in the last century. The Colberts managed our tribal affairs, and were said to be fabulously wealthy, but so far as I know I never met any of them.

Pa used the name of Colbert, whether strictly entitled to it or not. He named me Levi, after the great Levi Colbert, and often exhorted me to live up to the name. As well as I can make out, the first Levi Colbert was a fellow who knew how to look after his own interests, yet bore himself honorably toward our people. He married three or four different wives, that I *do* know—it was the custom in the old days, and he followed the old customs pretty regular—and that's one way I *don't* intend to profit by his example! For the rest, I don't reckon I've done the name much honor, but perhaps I've done it little harm—though I own I'm less sure of both harm and honor now than I was a month ago.

I was born down in the Chickasaw Homelands in northern Mississippi. My father and his brothers farmed a small acreage there, but my earliest memories are of village life, the cabin, my mother and my two little sisters, pounding corn to make Tom Fuller or *pulaska,* or hoeing the small patch of garden, and Cal and Watty always somewhere about. But I was only a lad of five in 1828, when the Tennessee Vacant Land Bill was put into effect, and soon after that my father moved the family north, and settled on the Obion River in Western Tennessee.

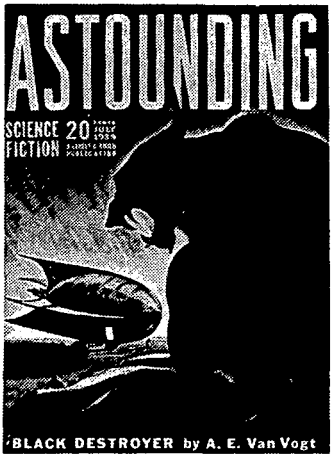
The way it come about was this. The Chickasaw chiefs, meaning mostly my Colbert relations, made treaties with the Government in 1816 and 1818, ceding what was left of our ancient tribal hunting grounds—that is, a little piece of western Kentucky bounded by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and the whole of the western portion of Tennessee—to the United States.

For many years before, the tribe had been pressured and harassed relentlessly by white intruders, greedy for land, who could see that the Tennessee canebrakes was prime cotton-growing country. They could not be kept out. By the time the chiefs made up their minds to sell, that country was already plentifully salted with white settlers, and the Indi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A TREASURE FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCIENCE FICTION!

A Hardbound Copy of the July 1939 Edition of ASTOUNDING!



Critics mark this issue as the first "great" issue edited by John W. Campbell, Jr. It contains the first published story, "Black Destroyer," by A.E. van Vogt and the first story by Isaac Asimov to be published in **ASTOUNDING.**

This hardbound facsimile of the July 1939 issue also contains an Epilogue in which A.E. van Vogt, Asimov, and Rocklynne comment on their own work, their feelings towards **ASTOUNDING**, and especially their relationships with John W. Campbell, Jr.

This classic collector's item is now only **$9.95** but act fast, supply is limited. Please send my 1939 **ASTOUNDING** to:

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Send check or money order (No COD's) to: Analog, P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462
Canadian or **Foreign** orders add **$5.00.** Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery.

M2BA-8

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ans had by and large given up hunting there. Those of the tribe, mostly the remaining full-bloods, who wished to pursue a traditional way of life, were at that time already moving beyond the Mississippi, where game was still plentiful and where living in the traditional way, in a central village surrounded by many miles of wild and uncultivated land, was still possible. Those who stayed—most of them mixed-bloods—did so because they had to a large extent abandoned the old ways and adopted the white style of farming, scattered out thin, with fenced fields and livestock; and my father, Charlie Colbert, was one of these.

Well, after the land had been purchased, there was a considerable to-do in the Congress about how it should be disposed of. General Jackson was known to favor a scheme whereby the Tennessee vacant land—"vacant" because the Chickasaws and Cherokees had been harassed into selling it—should be sold off by the section at auction to the highest bidder, and the proceeds given to the state for educational purposes. And Jackson, though holding no office at that time, was right up next to God with the Tennessee politicians.

But Davy Crockett had just come up to Washington fresh from the canebrake country, and he presented them with a different scheme. It was his first term, he having been elected to Congress only the year before, and properly speaking he'd no business challenging the mighty Jackson party. But he had little personal love for Jackson's people, having butted heads with some of them back home, and he genuinely disagreed with the position on the vacant lands. According to his thinking, the land should be offered cheap to the people already living on it—the people who had pushed in while it still belonged to the Chickasaws, and built their cabins and dug their wells and cleared and planted. They were Davy's kind of people, and he stuck up for them. If he had his way, every squatter should be offered a chance to buy 160 acres, a half section, including his own improvements, at a price he could afford.

Well, the debate went back and forth. Like I say, the Tennesseans, except for Davy and one or two others, mostly thought a heap of Old Hickory, they still called him the Hero down there; but he'd been involved in some very shady land speculation at the time of the 1816 Chickasaw Treaty, and when the scandal broke it hurt him considerable with the politicians from outside the state. The House wasn't going to let him have what he wanted without an argument, like it might've if word about the land deals hadn't got around.

And Davy Crockett was popular! He was a *real* frontiersman, the genuine article—more of a frontiersman by a mile than Old Hickory, who was from a higher and softer class of society altogether. Davy'd killed pretty near as many Indians as Jackson but he never swindled the Government out of twenty thousand dollars to line his own pockets with, and lied

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about it afterward, like the General had done. And he'd fought bears bare handed, and hewed out his own clearing in the wilderness with his own hands . . . well, everybody knows the stories. Even people that thought Davy nothing more than a backwoods clown respected his personal integrity; and his natural eloquence in defense of his land bill ought to have made them all stop and think. He may have let people use him, but he was no fool, and a great deal more than a clown.

So the Congressmen from the other states let the Tennesseans fight it out on the House floor, Davy Crockett and the poor squatters against Old Hickory and the landed gentry, then they supported Davy. Back home they used to say that Davy's way of putting that land bill before Congress—a manner and style that made it look like he just might be able to get it passed, too—was the thing that caused the bankers and the Quakers and the Whigs back east—and some anti-Jackson Democrats too—to blink a couple of times and see a presidential alternative to Jackson the Indian Hater *and* Jackson the Bank Hater, wearing the same buckskin shirt.

As I said, Davy and Old Hickory had been enemies for years; there was a time Davy didn't back a Jackson man for some state office, and the General never forgot nor forgave. It weren't no skin off Davy's nose if he and Jackson became opponents on a bigger stage than the one down home. So when the Easterners that saw their chance during the debate over the Tennessee Vacant Land Bill, and started courting Davy, needed him to distance himself from Jackson in a more decisive way, he had no objection. Now, Davy really *believed* in cheap land for white squatters. I don't think for a minute that he believed in free land for defrauded Chickasaws, but maybe I'm wrong about that; at least he did defend some Cherokees who were trying to get *their* land claims upheld, based on a treaty that said any Cherokee agreeing to become a citizen, and to abide by the laws of North Carolina and Georgia, could have 640 acres of his own ancestral lands free gratis for nothing.

However that may be, everybody knew that if Andrew Jackson became President he would make war on the Second Bank of the U.S. The Whigs, who supported the bank, were all in a sweat for Davy to run against Jackson. Which meant they wanted Davy to be not only their pet frontiersman and Indian fighter, and champion of the poor settler, but also their pet defender of the rights of the Red Man! You might wonder just how a fellow who fought as hard in the Creek Wars as Davy did could be dressed up to look like an Indian Lover, without losing any of the only-good-Indian-is-a-dead-Indian vote; but they had to try. There was a lot of sympathy for the Red Man in the East just then, from Pennsylvania on up north, and the Whigs knew that that sympathy could all be translated into votes, if Davy would come out against Indian Removal too,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which was an idea that was picking up steam in the South and West along about then.

So the long and the short of it was, they put it to him: our men in the Congress will bring your vacant lands bill to a vote, and get it passed, if you'll introduce another bill granting land rights to the Indians whose ancestral hunting grounds that same land used to be. There's the Cherokee precedent, you won't have to sell them anything new. And if *that* goes through, they said, it'll be time for some very serious talk.

And Davy agreed. I guess the notion of being President appealed to him even then, when it looked like such a preposterous idea. He fixed it so that the white squatters in the canebrake country could afford to buy half a section of the land they were living on illegally already, and then, riding on the coattails of that success, he fixed it that any head of a Chickasaw family that would become a citizen—a citizen, incidentally, with a vote—and abide by the laws of the state of Tennessee, could trade his legal allotment in the Mississippi Homelands for a half-section in the canebrakes.

The white squatters hadn't hardly got through celebrating the passage of the Vacant Lands Bill when they started meeting to vilify the passage of the Chickasaw Tenancy Bill, but Davy put it to them straight. He made a trip back there to his place in Rutherford and he told those squatters, "Fellows, I got you your farms, and the only way I could do it was to get farms for the Injuns too. Now, there's a lot more of you than there is of them, so you all settle down together here and learn to get along. I got to do it with all them savages up in Washington, and they ain't nothing happened in the Creek Wars that's a patch on what them cutthroat varmints up there will do a man."

And do you know, they bought it. They knew Davy was one of them, not a middle-Tennessee aristocrat like the Hero, and that they owed their farms to him and he had never let them down; but the truth is, he purely charmed those men, same as he charmed the whole country later on. People always underestimated Davy, and they always got fooled. Old Hickory looked unbeatable till the middle of that election year of 1828, with the country so ripe to be led by a tough backwoods Indian fighter who defended the rights of the little man. Nobody expected a half-baked greenhorn like Davy from Jackson's own state to beat the old man at his own game, even with all the power and influence of the Second Bank of the United States behind him; but by November Jackson was down and Crockett was up, and what happened after that, as they say, is history.

Well, my pa had often been hunting up in the canebrakes as a boy with his uncles, and he remembered that country as a mighty fine place. So when the chance came, he took it. Though not a full-blood, he had rights in the tribal lands and no wish to live according to the old ways.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He moved us up onto the North Fork of the Obion River in Obion County, not twenty miles from Davy Crockett's own farm, and had his half-section surveyed, and filed his claim, and cleared and planted. And a few years later, when the road from the Natchez Trace came through, he built a ferry over the river.

Watty and me grew up together there. My family traded a purebred boar for his mother, Callie, when Watty was just a baby. Callie always said her pa was a Cherokee chief, it was something her own ma had told her and I guess it might have been true. And Watty's pa was a mixed-blood from Muscle Shoals down in the Chickasaw Homelands, so Watty was even more of a mixup than me, and I was one-quarter white myself, more or less. That purebred boar had clearer blood than any of us. But I looked plain Indian, only with a little bit paler skin; and Watty looked plain African, only light brown colored with brown kinky hair, done up like Callie's in lots of knotty little braids bound with strings, the way all the Chickasaw slaves used to dress their hair.

Like I said, we grew up together. Slavery among my people is a different thing than you've ever seen among your own, and I've heard white people say they wouldn't have Indian Negroes, as they were too difficult to control, and too accustomed to our lenient ways. Except for me going to school, Watty and me was always together. We chopped cotton and corn, and helped Pa run the ferry, me working just as hard as Watty and him just as hard as me, but then we'd go off hunting for a week at a time, or fishing, or just fooling around. Pa used to take us possum hunting at night sometimes; I remember the big full moon and the lantern and the hound dog, Piomingo, baying till he scared the possum into playing dead and falling out of the tree, and Pa joking and laughing with us, treating me and Watty just the same. Those were the best times with Pa. He was a likeable, hard-working man when he was sober, but a mean drunk, and he always kept a bottle in the barn. And as the years went by there was more of the drunk in evidence, and less of the likeable fellow.

We boys was the same age, near as anybody could figure. Chickasaws don't keep track of birthdays, but my ma knew what year it was I was born in, 1823, and Watty was just a little bitty thing the size of me when we got Callie, and him too, from Esh-ma-tubba before we came up north to Obion County.

What I'm going to tell you about now happened in March or April of 1836. I made sure of the date, because it happened the day after we got the news about General Santa Anna killing all the Americans at the Alamo. Watty and me was thirteen or thereabouts. He was bigger than me, he could beat me at running and wrestling. I was still scrawny. But Watty never pressed his advantage of size; he was remarkably gentle, for such a strong boy. "What if you grow up bigger than me and pay me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back later?" he used to say, and smile his sleepy smile. "I ain't no dumb Indian." Another thing about him was, he was a Christian like his ma. I was converted at a school I went to, after leaving home; but Watty grew up Christian. Something else: he spoke no English, though he could understand it some. We always talked Chickasaw at home, because of Ma. Callie had talked English when she was a girl, but had forgot it from lack of use, though she understood people fairly well.

Well, the day after we heard about what happened at the Alamo, Pa came down to breakfast all sick and rheumy-eyed and said to me in English, so my ma wouldn't understand, "Levi, I done a terrible thing."

I knew Pa'd been out drinking the night before, but that was most nights by that time. I waited for him to tell me what he'd done, and my two little sisters froze in their chairs with their spoonsful of mush halfway to their mouths.

"Levi," said Pa, kind of whining, "I lost Watty to Bill Bertram in a crapshoot last night. He's coming to fetch him away this afternoon. I can't tell Callie or your ma. I don't know what to do."

The news skewered through me exactly like a bullet, or a lightning bolt, but my mind couldn't seem to take it in. All I could think of to say to him was, "But we was going fishin' this afternoon."

"Then you'd best fish quick," said Pa, " 'cause Bill Bertram will be here at four o'clock and Watty needs to be ready."

My youngest sister, Mary, commenced to cry. "Buy him back, Pa," she sobbed. "I don't want Watty to go away."

Pa said dolefully, "I wouldn't'a lost him in the first place if I had any money to buy him back with. He's going, and that's all there is to it. But I swear I don't know how I'm going to tell Callie. I wish I'd fell in the river and drownded before I gambled that boy away, but it's over and done with now." He wiped his red eyes on his sleeve. "Levi, you best go tell him to get his things together. Then you boys take the day off. Have a last day together. But you be back here by mid-afternoon, you hear? Old Man Bertram'll have the law on me if I can't produce his property when he comes to collect it." He put his head between his hands and groaned.

Old Man Bertram was a drunk like Pa, only older and worse—mean when he was sober, mean as a rattlesnake when he'd been drinking. I knew what Pa said was true, and for a minute I hated him so much for losing Watty to such a man that I saw a picture in my head of my picking up a piece of stove wood and bashing his brains in.

But instead I stumbled out of the house and across the barnyard, scattering chickens. Watty and Callie were still in the barn, seeing to the milking. Callie smiled when I came in, the same slow, sleepy smile Watty had. I remember she was wearing a bright green dress under her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shawl, and shiny brass rings in her ears, like the ones in Watty's, only three times as big. She said, "I put you boys up some dinner. Bring us back a nice mess of fish now."

When she said that, I felt like throwing up. But I had just enough wit not to say anything till she'd gone on back to the house, pulled sideways by the weight of the full wooden pail, and Watty and me were alone.

When I told him, Watty went pale as a ghost and dropped his bucket; milk sloshed into the straw and all of a sudden we were ankle-deep in cats. I remember how he shook, and I saw, though I didn't think about it then, that this news had struck him different than it had struck me. What was to me a brand-new, utterly unthinkable thought, wasn't at all new or unthinkable to him. The idea that Watty could be handed over to some other person, just like a blanket or a bucket of lard, bewildered me; for him it was more like hearing that his worst nightmare had come true. He believed me at once. "Marse Charlie was drunk," he said, not asking, stating a fact.

"You know he was. He'd never have done it sober." Then we stood and stared at each other, and I never saw terror like that on a human face in my life, not even on the battlefield. Looking at Watty's face, that I'd known all my life, transfigured with terror, I said without knowing I was going to: "We got to get away from here."

Rachel, you must understand that the idea of helping a slave escape had been for me, till that moment, like the idea of robbing a bank: something I knew of as possible, but nothing I'd ever connected my own self with. In all my wild imaginings I had never imagined myself as a fugitive from justice. But the prospect presented itself to me in the same light as if Watty had fallen off the ferry in mid-crossing: he was in trouble, I would do all I could to save him. That's how I felt, and what I intended, and that is what I did.

As soon as I knew we were going to run away together, my brain commenced to work again. "Callie said she put us up some dinner. I'm going to fetch it now; you get the blankets off your bed and a good knife and whatever you can find in the cellar, maybe some spuds and onions and a poke to tote them in. And your boots," because we was both wearing moccasins, and the land all about was under water. "We can light out soon as we get ready. Pa said we was to have the whole day off to go fishing and that's what I'll tell 'em back at the house."

Watty didn't argue. He just said, "Levi, where we going to go? We can't hide out in no cypress swamp waiting for the mosquitoes to suck us dry. We got to have someplace to *go*."

Just like I'd planned the whole thing to perfection I answered him right back: "We'll go to Davy Crockett's place. He's there himself, home

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for a visit, I heard a man on the ferry say so. He could help us, he's the President, ain't he? He can do whatever he likes."

A little color had come back into Watty's face, and he said hotly that he didn't put no stock at all in Davy Crockett's helping him out. "They call him Indian Lover around these parts, and grumble about how Old Hickory wouldn't never'a let a fine farm like this one here be owned by no murderin' redskin"—he said "Indian Lover" and "murderin' redskin" in English, which startled me—"but they ain't never said he was unreliable on slavery, Levi, so what makes you think for one minute he's going to go out of his way to help *me*?"

Watty had *never* talked this way before. Until that morning the idea that he minded being our slave had never crossed my mind. Hearing him say such things frightened me almost as much as Pa's announcement had; but I shouted that he was wasting time talking, we could worry about all that once we were well away from the farm. I said, rather wildly, "Davy vetoed the Indian Removal Bill, didn't he? Ain't that the only reason we ain't all living over in the Territories right now? We'll tell the President you're one-quarter Cherokee and one-quarter Chickasaw, and one-quarter *white*! But come on, Watty, come *on*! We got to get away from here!"

He snapped out of it then, and did what I told him. An hour later the two of us had crossed the North Fork and were scurrying through the big stand of cypress east of our place, heading south, over towards Rutherford and the Crockett farm.

Getting away from the house was surprisingly easy. Nobody could bear to look at Watty, though everybody but Callie now knew of the calamity. They all skulked and hid from the sight of him. Pa had sent Callie to fetch a couple of spring lambs from a neighbor, to keep her out of the way. So Watty never said goodbye to his ma; but it was the only way to keep the secret and I thought things had worked out pretty well, considering what a disaster had befallen us.

Once away, we went fast. We had ranged all over this country together, we knew every cottonfield and swampy brake and farmstead for miles around. We kept to the cypress groves and boggy places and avoided people, but even so we made good headway, crossing invisible streams on invisible logs in a featureless sea of floodwater and trampling down the wild berry canes with our heavy boots. Aboveground, the weather held dry. We pressed forward all day, not stopping and not talking much, till it got dark, and then we pushed through the brambles to a high dry island where we'd often camped before. It was a long way from the nearest farm or town, and we were soaked and exhausted; we decided to chance a fire, and Watty built one and struck a spark while I plastered mud on three or four of the potatoes he'd been humping all day in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gunnysack. When the fire'd died down some, we scraped it away and buried the spuds in the coals to roast.

I don't recall that we talked much that night, tired and scared as we were, aware that they all knew by then that we'd run away, and would be hunting for us soon. I do remember Watty saying passionately that he wasn't going to live on Old Man Bertram's farm if they killed him for it. It wasn't just the drinking; there was something unclean about that old white man. Watty said he absolutely would not do it. Old Man Bertram's house and barn, on the hundred and sixty acres he'd built on and "improved" back when all this land was still supposed to belong to us Chickasaws, were falling to pieces. He'd found a young wife somewheres, but she was slatternly and unkempt and looked about sixty, all worn out with childbearing and abuse. The six slaves he already owned always looked wretched, and more than half-starved. Thinking of them, I was flooded once again with a blinding rage at my father, that he could have risked having to hand Watty over to such a man. And I remember knowing then, clearly, that I hated Pa, and deciding to go away with Watty, and never come home no more.

It was cold that night, but we rolled up together in Watty's blankets and slept hard in spite of everything, we were that done in.

Next morning, the first thing that happened was that we blundered onto a bear, just woke up and bad-tempered, prowling through the cane looking for something to eat. A she-bear with cubs would have been bad trouble; luckily for us, this was a young he-bear, glad enough to go crashing off as fast as he could. But it scared us. We hadn't been keeping a lookout for bear, a month before their usual wake-up time, but it was an early spring that year. I hadn't brought my rifle, and the canebrakes was full of bear. But you don't carry a rifle, going fishing.

But we had to go on. It came on a mild spring day, birds singing their heads off, squirrels leaping about, deer trotting away through the thickets and stopping to look back at us. Watty and me marched along all day, except—like on the first day—and like some I've been doing just lately!—a lot of the marching was *wading*. The land lay all under water a good mile back from the channels on both sides. Avoiding roads and towns like we had to, we had no choice but to swim the Middle and South Forks of the Obion, which were in flood from the spring melt, and the current both swift and cold, pulling our feet out from under us. What with one thing and another, it was twilight before we came to the edge of the woods and saw lamplight glowing in the windows of President Crockett's house.

Watty sat down on the ground, telling me plainer than words that it was my plan and what happened next was up to me. The truth was, I hadn't thought beyond getting us this far; but I spoke as if I had. "You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wait here. I'll go on up to the house and ask to talk to the President. If I don't come back in an hour, better lay low till morning, then—" Then what? What could Watty do on his own, a fugitive slave everybody was out looking for, that didn't even talk English? Those twenty cold, wet, dangerous miles had made me see things in a different light; suddenly I appreciated the recklessness of what we had done, and the thought in my mind was that if I couldn't persuade the President to help us, Watty might best think about giving himself up. But I knew better by then than to say any such thing to him.

So instead I squared my shoulders and trudged across the field to the house.

There was a soldier in a blue uniform, with a musket, guarding the front door. He watched me coming. I walked up to him and said, "I need to see the President."

"That a fact," said the soldier in a bored voice, and shook his head. "Now, it may surprise you to hear this, but the President of the United States didn't come all this way just so he could talk to no little shirttail Indian brat. You run along home. Go on now."

"Please tell him I want to see him," I said. He told me again to get along home. I thought we might go on like that all night, but then the soldier opened the door, put his head inside, and called, and another soldier came out. "Do me a favor, Ned," the first one said. "Dust this boy's britches and send him home."

When the second one started for me, all I could think of to do was raise a hullabaloo. I backed off and shouted and yelled—I don't know what all—and at that the first soldier put down his musket and they both went for me. One chased me into the arms of the other, who began to drag me away from the house; I flailed and kicked, making as much noise as possible, and helped considerably in this by the swearing of the soldier who had hold of me.

Then a new voice said, "Boys, what's all the commotion about?"

The soldier dropped me on the ground like a sack of meal and stood at attention. "This here little Injun come up here bold as brass and demanded to see you, *sir*."

"Well, boy," said Davy Crockett, "now you see me. What in thunderation did you want to see me *about*?"

I looked up and there he was, a black silhouette in the light from the open door, though I could tell he was wearing formal clothes, a frock coat, and carrying a napkin; he'd been at his dinner. I spoke up and said I needed to talk with him private. This amused the President as much as it exasperated and embarrassed the two soldiers; he laughed, and said I might have ten minutes by his big watch of the presidential time, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then he would have to rejoin his guests. And he told me to come in. I picked myself up and did as he said.

The house wasn't so different from ours, plastered logs inside and a big fireplace, two largish rooms down and a loft above. As I entered, my knees went weak from the good smell of cooking. In the second room three well-dressed gentlemen were seated around a table spread with a white cloth and covered with dishes. They turned to stare at me, no doubt curious about the interruption—leading citizens of Rutherford and Union City, most likely. I didn't recognize anyone but ducked back in alarm for fear one of them might recognize me, or at least get a good look at me and put two and two together. But no one did.

The President indicated I was to climb up into the loft, and he climbed up after me. He asked me my name and age and I told him, Levi Colbert, thirteen. His eyebrows went up. "I knew the first Levi Colbert. Any relation?" And then, "It's a hard name to live up to." Then he remarked that I was soaking wet and shaking with cold, which was true, and made me hunker down and hug the chimney to get warm. He saw that my face and hands were criss-crossed with bleeding scratches and asked the reason, and I explained that I'd been crawling through the canebrakes for two whole days.

Then the President sat himself down on a stool and listened to me tell my tale from start to finish, which I did in the most unadorned fashion imaginable, being so tuckered out and in such anxiety of mind, and unmanned to boot by his kind manner. His face changed from humorous to grave while I talked, and when I was done he didn't say anything for a spell. Then he told me it was a very serious crime to help a slave run away. He said that as President it was his duty to uphold the law, and other things of the sort, and partway through this speech I started to cry—I couldn't help it, everything seemed so bleak and hopeless, and I couldn't think what to do now except give up. When he finished I blubbered that Watty was one-quarter Cherokee and one-quarter Chickasaw and one-quarter white, and everybody knew Davy Crockett was a friend of the Indians nowadays; but I didn't need nobody to tell me how pointless all that was, since the one-quarter of Watty that was black condemned all the rest, and so I figured we were both goners.

Then the President surprised me. He got down off his stool and sat on the floor of the loft next to me in his good trousers, with his back to the chimney, and said something like this: "Levi, when I was a boy of thirteen, the same as you are now, I got myself in trouble with the schoolmaster, and my pa was looking to lick me with a hickory switch for missing school, and for pure terror of the two of them I lit out and run away from home. I was gone a couple of years altogether, and had a sight of adventures, and many a time was cold and hungry and friendless—and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I never would have come through it all if it hadn't been for the kindness of strangers who took pity on a homeless boy and give me a ride, or a little money to buy a bit of food and keep my courage up. And after all that I came home again in the end. But I was my own man, or boy. Even then I could never bear to wear any man's collar, I had to be free."

I'd often heard people say how Davy broke with Old Hickory because the Jackson party wanted him to knuckle under and wear a collar engraved *"MY DOG. Andrew Jackson,"* so I nodded.

Then he rubbed his face and thought a bit, and looked at me over that big hook nose he had, and finally he told me to wait there, and climbed down the ladder. And a minute later he climbed back up, followed by a portly gentleman who puffed a good deal. The President said that this was Mr. Barclay, from Philadelphia, and he thought I'd best tell this Mr. Barclay my story, but he didn't want to know any more about it himself. And then he climbed back down and left us alone—but reappeared yet again with a plate of meat and bread for me, and a cup half full of whiskey "to warm my insides."

If you have guessed already that this Mr. Barclay—which I'm very sure was not his real name—had connections with what is called the Underground Railway, you would be correct. It appeared that the gentlemen dining with the President that evening were guests of his from the East, and not the local bigwigs I had taken them for.

Now I know for a sure and certain fact that Davy Crockett was no Abolitionist. He'd owned slaves himself in former times. But neither was he a convinced and committed pro-slavery man. And many of his Eastern supporters purely hated slavery. Davy had to juggle his peculiar coalition of poor farmers and bankers, Indian Lovers and Indian Haters and Abolitionists, as best he could, so it was not after all so very surprising to find such a guest as Mr. Barclay from Philadelphia tucking in at the President's table in Rutherford, Tennessee.

This same Mr. Barclay took Watty away with him that very night. But the adventure was by no means over for me. There was a bodacious to-do to be faced when I came straggling home two days later: Callie in hysterics, Pa humiliated and furious, and—worst of all—me getting indentured to Old Man Bertram in Watty's place, as punishment for helping him escape.

Rachel, I was obliged to work for that old man three years without wages, to keep him from setting the law on me and Pa. And I tell you, I was *mighty glad* Watty had got away. Bad as he treated me, his slaves got treated worse. I don't know how long I could have stood it; but about the time I turned sixteen the old sot fell out of his wagon, coming home drunk one winter night, and froze to death; and the term of my indenture ended with his demise.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Soon after I was offered a chance to ride with a drover to convey some horses to Nashville, and took it. And when I got to Nashville, and the drover paid me off, I went on east instead of west, and didn't see my home again for many years.

From the foregoing, you will have realized that I had abandoned my intention to run away North with Watty and Mr. Barclay. Trying to smuggle a brown-skinned African-featured boy and an Indian boy both into free territory would surely have made Mr. Barclay's job harder by making him more conspicuous and he might well have refused to take me; but the fact is, I never asked to go. President Crockett's tale of running away for fear of his father and the schoolmaster had impressed me deeply. At the end of two whole years' hardship and knocking about the world, *he* had ended up at home again after all. I figured I'd had enough of being on the move to last me quite a while, and if I was likely to wind up back home again in the end, I might as well go there now, and spare myself the hardships of the road.

I don't know how the hardships of the road could have been any worse than those I endured in the service of Old Man Bertram, but I couldn't foresee that as I made my way back through the flooded country, going slow to give Watty and Mr. Barclay a good start, crying because I missed Watty already and felt certain I would never see him again, and because I knew everybody would come down on me when I got back and try to make me tell where he was, and also because I was only thirteen years old, a Chickasaw boy in a country full of people who had shot Chickasaws like dogs not so very long before, and hadn't forgot the knack of it neither, and because all these dreadful events had been too much for me.

I made a plan as I went along. I decided to say that Watty had drowned while we were swimming the Middle Fork, and that was near enough to the truth that I could make a good story of it. I almost drowned myself, going back. Then later, when I judged it safe, I'd tell Callie what had really happened.

All this came about the way I planned it; but I never looked to bind myself for seven years to that foul old drunkard. If he hadn't died when he did, I believe the choking sensation of wearing a collar engraved *"MY DOG. Wm. Bertram."* would have surely forced me to run away, though I had no desire to be a fugitive a second time.

Well, Rachel, that is my story. I know you can scarcely help but feel that my part in it, and President Crockett's part, were best left untold even to you, however warmly you may sympathize with my feelings and deplore my father's actions. I had no expectation of revealing any of these events to you or to anyone, and but for a most remarkable occurrence would very likely have carried them with me to my grave.

What altered my intention, after much agitated considerating, was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this. You know that after receiving my shoulder wound at Cincinnati I lingered on a month there, at a Methodist Church which had been turned into a hospital. As I began to regain my strength I used to walk about the place for exercise, and to be of use to those more grievously wounded than myself. One day I wandered into a room where some wounded Yankee prisoners lay. To my surprise I saw several Negroes, swathed in bandages, lying among the white men. I knew that companies of freedmen and freeborn Negroes had been formed under white officers, but had never met with these on any battlefield. But obviously they had been at Cincinnati, for here was the evidence.

Wandering nearer, and peering cautiously at these black soldiers, I saw with a shock that one had copper rings run through his earlobes. The only place I ever saw these large rings in the ears of a male Negro was among the Chickasaw slaves, where it is the common practice of both men and women to decorate themselves in that way. My curiosity was roused further. I went up to the cot where the man lay—and knew at once, despite the swathings of bandages around his head, that this was my long-lost Watty, grown to manhood, not safe and sound by any means but found at last.

I wonder whether you can possibly imagine my feelings upon discovering that here was the childhood companion I had never thought to set eyes on again in this world—but gravely wounded, no longer free, and my sworn enemy into the bargain!

That his wound was grave, I ascertained from the surgeon. He lay in a coma; they were doubtful of his recovery. Upon learning that I had known Watty as a child, the surgeon urged me strongly to sit by his bedside and talk to him, as a well-known voice has often succeeded in bringing a patient out of a comatose state when all else fails. I was happy to accede to this suggestion. For several days I sat beside Watty's sickbed and spoke to him, in the Chickasaw language, of our life in the canebrakes, of the Obion River and my father's ferry, of hunting and fishing, of the farm work—anything and everything that came to mind. The memories flooded back, though many a year had passed since I had cared to think of that life.

And not to leave you in suspense of the outcome I will tell you at once that my efforts were successful; for on the fourth day Watty's eyes flickered and rolled, and he spoke to me, and after several more days he was fully conscious (though in considerable pain), able to take nourishment, recovering from the astonishment of my having found him (and perhaps saved him once again!—a thought which I own affects me very strangely) and ready to say what had become of him since that night when he had embraced me for one quick tearful instant, before being led away into the darkness by Mr. Barclay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Briefly then: Mr. Barclay had friends all along the route north, who were ready to swear to all and sundry that Watty was Mr. Barclay's slave and always had been. He swiftly obtained some papers to prove it, as well as some less exotic clothes for Watty, whose gaudy but thorn-ripped garments were at once too tattered and too unusual to pass muster as the traveling outfit of a wealthy man's servant. As they could not undo the knots in his hair, they cut it, close to his scalp.

Watty's inability to speak English was a problem at first, but he applied himself and learned enough to get by in a very short time. (It turned out he knew more English than he realized, having heard it spoken all his life.) His Chickasaw accent was another problem. I gathered that they solved both problems by agreeing that Watty should not speak at all where anybody could hear him. Watty said that as for his rescuer, once they began their journey Mr. Barclay's own eastern accent turned to pure Virginia Planter.

Mr. Barclay brought Watty all the way back to Philadelphia with him. They took passage on a steamboat at Paducah and traveled up the Ohio all the way to Pittsburgh. The rest of the journey was made by rail—by Aboveground Railway, as you might say.

Watty lived in Mr. Barclay's house for a time—and was very kindly treated by the family—but the Underground Railway people decided that Philadelphia was too far south to be safe. Even though it seemed unlikely that anybody would consider Watty valuable enough to chase him so far, things had happened to make Mr. Barclay and his friends uneasy. At first there was some talk of sending Watty to Canada, but in the end it was decided he would be better off placed with a family of free Negroes in Boston. So they sent him there.

And this is the part of the tale that has impelled me to break silence after keeping the secret so long. In Boston it was at once incumbent upon Watty to find a way to earn his keep. As he had grown up on a farm, they naturally looked about for a trustworthy farmer to take him on as a hired hand—and in this way a place was found for him on a good-sized farm southeast of Boston, near a town called Marshfield. And who should own this farm but Daniel Webster!

Does it not seem to you a strange destiny for a former slave boy, to have crossed paths with such an uncommon number of great men?

Watty attempted to describe his feelings upon arriving at last in the situation that had been arranged for him, but I doubt that I can appreciate them fully. The sort of farming he was used to was not much like the New England sort, the weather and country being both so different. He suffered a good deal from the cold, especially at first, and sorely missed his mother and me. But he got used to it all in time. His English quickly improved. (We were speaking Chickasaw together, but at this point he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

switched over temporarily to demonstrate his perfect fluency in English, as well as to amuse me with his Yankee pronunciation.) He also had his liberty, and a thoroughgoing determination that he would do anything rather than lose it.

The men over him were prejudiced against colored people, but his work gave satisfaction and this brought increased responsibility, and in time Watty came to the attention of Daniel Webster himself, who (though away a good deal) was sometimes at home. Mr. Webster became interested in Watty and took a notion to provide him with a basic education, in case he should later wish to follow a trade, and lessons in reading and writing were accordingly arranged. Watty appears to have astonished his employer with his quickness and readiness to learn. More lessons ensued—history, the natural sciences.

By this time Watty had attained the age of twenty, Daniel Webster had attained a place in the Cabinet, and the whole country, North and South, was in a ferment over slavery and the question of secession. And one fateful day, his benefactor said to Watty that he believed peaceful secession to be impossible, and for this reason had reluctantly been ready to accept the principle that runaway slaves must be returned to their owners, as the only means by which the Union could be preserved. But having known Watty—heard his story—imagined the horror of his being thrown back into the clutches of such as Old Man Bertram—Mr. Webster now understood that slavery was too high a price to pay, even to preserve the Union.

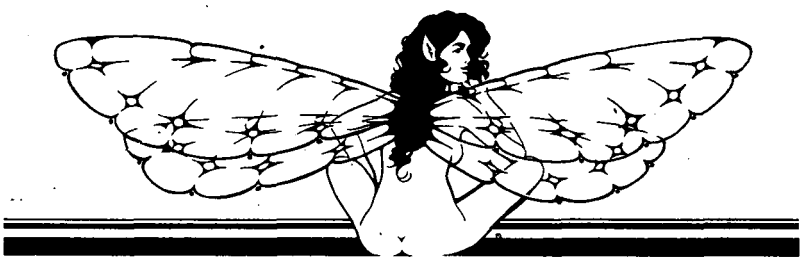
Rachel, you may guess what terrible thoughts have been whirling in my brain since the day I had this from Watty. Again and again I ask myself, did Mr. Clay's Compromise fail, and the South secede, and the War, which has cost so many lives and so much suffering, begin—because an Indian boy helped a slave boy to run away, all those long years ago? Can it be that all unwittingly I have participated in events which, though seeming small, have had so mighty an effect? There are moments when my oppression and agitation of mind can scarcely be described, and I begin even to imagine how one day the United States—our future Confederacy's great neighbor—may have a Commander in Chief called President Watty Colbert; it would astonish me no more than any of these other great oaks from little acorns grown.

Stumbling in the dark we make our choices, the consequences of which are beyond our understanding; but as God is my witness I acted for the right as I saw it then. May God forgive me—and may you, my darling Rachel, forgive me too—if I was wrong. Wrong perhaps also in sharing my story with you, though the burden seemed too heavy to bear alone. I cannot know. Yet how desperately, and how hopelessly, have I wished

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for reassurance, that all that I have done will finally seem to have been for the best! ●

Author's note:
In our presidential reality, Andrew Jackson's part in the land speculation scheme of 1819 was hushed up and his partner suffered to take the rap for them both ("the truth would not unlikely have deprived the nation of one of its most famous presidents."—Thomas Perkins Abernethy, From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee, *p. 276; the Tennessee Vacant Lands Bill was introduced and debated in the House in April 1828, but was tabled in May instead of being brought to a vote; and Daniel Webster supported Henry Clay's Compromise of 1850 (including the Fugitive Slave Law) which contributed to its being passed, thereby all but certainly delaying the Secession by a crucial eleven years—during which time the North's wealth, population, and industrial development grew dramatically, giving the overwhelming material advantage to the North during the Civil War.*



NEXT ISSUE

Nebula and Hugo Award-winner **Connie Willis** returns with our October cover story, a big new novella called "Jack," which plunges us deep into the chaotic and dangerous days of World War II London, London during the Blitz, when Nazi bomber planes were making deadly nightly forays through the skies above the battered and beleaguered city, and London itself was burning—and shows us that not *all* of the terrors to be encountered are the bombs falling from the sky, that there are plenty of dangers to be faced down on the ground as well.... This is Willis's most powerful, compelling, and moving work since her renowned "The Last of the Winnebagoes"—it's sure to be one of the year's major stories, and it's a special treat that you're *not* going to want to miss.

ALSO IN OCTOBER: Hugo and Nebula-winner **Gregory Benford** takes us ahead to a distant future where embattled men and women are forced to reinvent the ancient art of war, and a deadly clash between humans and an army of killer machines soon be-

(continued on page 168)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIDELITY

by Greg Egan

Throughout history, some people have searched for the perfect love "potion." With the advent of nanotechnology, they may get *just* what they asked for...

I slipped out from between the sheets quietly, determined not to wake Lisa until I returned with breakfast, but then she stirred and held out a hand toward me, and although her eyes were still firmly closed—although, for all I knew, she might simply have been tossing in her sleep—*I* couldn't help taking hold of that outstretched hand.

She opened her eyes and smiled. We kissed. We were both still half asleep; it was like a warm, lazy dream of a kiss. My guard was down; it doesn't matter what you say in dreams.

"I love you," I whispered.

She flinched. Very slightly, but unmistakably. I cursed myself silently, but there was no undoing the mistake. I meant the words sincerely, and I had no doubt that she believed me; the trouble was, every affirmation I made inevitably reminded her of others. Others which had sounded equally convincing, at the time.

As I straightened and started to turn away, she said flatly, "Do you? For how long?"

I should have ignored her, walked out, made breakfast. The mood would have passed; it always did, eventually. I never could walk away, though; somewhere, somehow, I'd been brainwashed into believing that it was always better to talk things through.

I steeled myself and turned to face her. "You *know* how I feel about you. Tell me, have I ever done *one thing* to make you think I've stopped loving you?" Another mistake; Protestations of the Aggrieved Husband stank of betrayal, too.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She was sitting now, arms folded, rocking slightly back and forth; an unsettling, compulsive motion. "No. I just wondered how long you expect it to *last*."

I knew from experience that nothing I could say would reassure her. There was no right answer. I might as well have shrugged my shoulders and replied: *How the fuck should I know?*

"All my life. I hope." I instantly regretted adding that lame—if honest—proviso, but I needn't have worried; she ignored it completely.

"*All your life?* Really? Not ten years, like my parents? Not twelve years, like yours? Not five years, like my brother? Not *six months,* like your sister? We're going to be the exception, are we? *Theirs was a love that broke all the rules!*" There was never any need to mention her two ex-husbands and my two ex-wives; they were there, implicitly, at the top of every list of the reasons we were destined to fail.

I said, blandly, "We'll just have to try harder than they did."

I no longer put much effort into the argument. It's not that she'd won me over to her absurd pessimism, or that I'd stopped caring about her pain. I loved her, and it hurt me to see her in the grip of these fears, however unfounded I believed them to be. I was weary, though, of arguing, when no amount of reason, or passion, seemed to get through to her. I had hoped that once we were married, she would at least begin to accept the *possibility* that we had a real future together. Instead, she seemed to have become more fearful than ever, and I had no idea what more I could do to prove my commitment to her.

"Everybody *tries,*" she said, scornfully. "How far do you think that gets them?"

I made a noise of pure exasperation. "What's the point in worrying about it? Things are working now, aren't they? If problems arise, we'll handle them. Or *try to.* What else can we do? We got married, we took a vow. What the fuck else can anyone possibly *do?*"

I must have raised my voice more than I'd meant to; the psychopath next door thumped the wall twice with something heavy, just as Lisa said, "We could use *Lock.*"

I almost laughed, but I hesitated, waiting for a sign that she *was* joking. As a joke, it would have been brilliant. We could have collapsed into hysterics, rolling around on the bed, trying to outdo each other with mock advertisements: "Worried about the spark going out between you and that Someone Special? Now, your worries are over! For a relationship that lasts, and lasts, *and lasts*—"

It wasn't a joke.

She said, "We have something important, don't we?"

I nodded dumbly.

"Something worth protecting?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes." Light-headed, I sat down on the bed.

"Ben?"

I broke out of my stupor. "Don't you have *any* faith in me? In *us?* What do you think—if we don't have our feelings cemented into place, they're just going to slip away?"

She said, quietly, "It's been known to happen."

I just shook my head and stared at her. She stared back. Pleading. Defiant. As my indignation faded, I was struck by a second, far more painful, realization: I had thought I'd understood her fears—after all, I'd been hurt myself, disillusioned myself—but now it was clear that I'd never even guessed at the depth of her insecurity. We'd only been married three months, but we'd been together for almost two years—and what had I done, in all that time, to help her throw off this suffocating misery? I'd listened and nodded, I'd patronized her, I'd recited platitudes. How could I have been so blind to her pain, for so long?

The worst of it was, I still didn't know what more I could have done.

"You said we have to try harder. *This* would be trying harder."

"No. It would be not trying at all."

That brought a surge of anger. "Yeah? And what's so awful about making it easy? I'm not a masochist. I don't *need* to suffer to be happy. I don't *need* to struggle. What do you think—it makes everything more precious? More worthwhile? Well, I've been through all of that shit, and I *know* it's not what *I* want. So if you think love is about *martyrdom,* maybe you should just—"

The wall shuddered again, and then Sarah started crying.

Sarah was the child of Lisa's first marriage; nine years old, but an infant for life, thanks to congenital syphilis. Lisa's husband had known that he had the disease, but had never bothered to tell her. She and the child had been cured—their bodies rid of the infection—but the damage done to Sarah was irreversible.

The familiar outrage welled up in me. *No fucking wonder she's cynical; if anyone has a right. . . .* A moment later, though, I couldn't help thinking: *What is she saying now? That for all she knows, I'm no better than he was?* Because if that's what she believed—

"I'll go," I muttered. I bent over and kissed her again, and found that I was trembling.

Her anger had passed; I think she'd finally realized just how much of a shock she'd given me. She said, "Will you think about it? *Please?*"

I hesitated, then nodded. I thought the whole idea was insane, but how could I dismiss the one thing she saw as giving her hope?

"I don't want to lose you," she said.

"You won't." I wanted to say more: some clichéd but honest words of comfort, some trite, sincere declaration of love.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There would have been no point, though. She'd heard it all before.

We didn't discuss *Lock* again until three months later, but I thought about it a great deal in the meantime, often when I should have been working.

"The honeymoon's over," said my boss, humorlessly, every time he caught me daydreaming at my workstation. I was thirty-six years old, in a responsible—if dead-end—job in a chemical engineering firm, but I began to feel like some kind of junior office boy in a state of adolescent confusion. People my age were supposed to be in perfect control of their relationships, but if two broken marriages weren't enough, Lisa's suggestion had blown away any last trace of complacency. Maybe that was a good thing; I didn't want to take what we had for granted. Nor, though, did I wish to spend every waking moment questioning it, analyzing it, dissecting it.

Using *Lock,* of course, would mean never having to question it again. . . .

The whole point of most neural implants was to *alter* the brain, to give the user access to mental states, skills, or beliefs, which they could not have achieved otherwise. From recreational hallucinations to Mandarin in five minutes; from reinforcing absolutely (or rejecting unequivocally) a wavering religious belief/sexual preference/political allegiance to creating a useful moral precept or disposing of an inconvenient one; there wasn't a neural function left, however hallowed, however banal, that an implant couldn't tailor to the user's requirements.

There'd been no shortage of demand for the devices; apparently, most people were far from content with the personalities they'd had so little say in shaping. Once an initial deference for the brain was overcome, millions of consumers in the wealthiest nations had embraced the technology wholeheartedly.

Not everyone, though. Some people found the whole idea completely repugnant—dehumanizing, or blasphemous—and there was nothing the implant manufacturers could do to win them over. Others, while unoffended by the mechanics *per se,* stubbornly refused to see themselves as needing any kind of alteration. However hard the media pushed the new cult of self-improvement, the polls revealed a substantial minority who could afford the technology, and who had no deep-seated ethical qualms—but who simply didn't *want* to change.

As they say, The Market abhors a vacuum.

Ordinary implants sent out an army of nanomachines, to forge links between several million neurons and the implant's optical processor. Microscopic electrodes embedded in the chosen neurons served both to monitor, and manipulate, the electrochemical signals propagating in and out of each cell. With enough of these connections, and enough computing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

power, the implant could override, and substitute for, selected portions of the brain.

Lock did no such thing. It built no neural bypass—it planted no electrodes at all. Instead, its nanomachines wrought (highly selective) damage on their target neurons, destroying the cells' normal capacity to alter the strength of existing synaptic contacts, and to forge new ones—but doing so with such delicacy and precision that the neurons remained perfectly intact and functional in every other respect. Effectively, *Lock* hard-wired part of the brain, making change impossible.

Lock was for people on the crest of a wave. People who were perfectly happy with who they were, but fearful of who they might become.

If the rumors were to be believed, a dozen best-selling authors and chart-topping rock stars could testify that the well-timed use of *Lock* had allowed them to crank out many more imitations of their most successful works than would otherwise have been conceivable. Harrison Oswald had confessed on international holovision that the last four of his five, megabuck-earning "Yellow Serpent" trilogies owed their unshakeable thematic consistency to *Lock,* and Insistent Rhythms had copied their own first hit single half a dozen times with such fidelity that even the Korean style-pirating computers had been unable to compete.

In the creative professions, though, *Lock* had been a complete disaster. Young mathematicians and theoretical scientists, hoping to extend the productive period which normally ended in the late twenties, had found themselves, instead, prematurely stale and burnt out. The engine of creativity, instead of being reinforced against decay, had been fused into a solid, useless lump.

Of course, Lisa and I had no interest in trying to affect our professional lives; the parts of our brains responsible for her paralegal talents, and my engineering skills, would be left free to grow and change—or wither —as the demands of our careers decreed.

The question was, could the pathways we *did* want frozen be identified by the implant? Reluctant as I was to admit it, I couldn't see why not. I suffered from no mystical delusions about the causes of love; if I felt it, it was there in my skull, as amenable to localization as Harrison Oswald's dreary muse—and far more worthy of preservation. The tabloids claimed that every celebrity marriage that lasted a year or more endured because of *Lock;* those stories can't all have been true . . . but they can't all have been false, either.

Of course I had misgivings, at first. Part of me squirmed with a predictable, visceral revulsion at the thought of fossilizing *any* part of my brain—let alone the part that dealt with my feelings for Lisa. Freely choosing to act on our feelings was one thing, but letting ourselves become enslaved by them—unable even to *want* to break free—would render the whole idea of commitment meaningless. *Self-imposed brain damage. Emotional paralysis. A parody of love.* It was obscene.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the same time, though, I had to admit that there *was* something almost intoxicating about the possibility of hijacking the future this way—of dictating, absolutely, the emotional life of the person I'd yet to become. There was a whiff of immortality to it. I *knew* that I was not the same person as I had been, five years, ten years, twenty years before. However much I mourned those lost selves, I couldn't resurrect them (and, to be honest, I didn't really want to), but I *could* avoid the fate of being mourned myself, in turn.

With *Lock,* I could *endure.*

Gradually, my initial misgivings began to seem childish and irrational. We wouldn't be "emotionally paralyzed," we wouldn't be numb; we'd be *precisely* as loving and responsive as we were right now—no more, no less. As for being "enslaved" by my feelings, wasn't that already the case? The truth was, I was a happy slave, *I didn't want to break free,* and the whole idea of being "able" or "unable" to feel differently was a hazy concept at best. Suppose I felt the same way about Lisa, all my life, without using *Lock;* in what practical sense would I have ever been "able" to stop loving her? You only live one life; it's not just futile to think about what "might have been"—it's *meaningless.* And if all *Lock* did was rule out choices that I never would have made in any case, then how could that entail a loss of freedom?

Anyway, screw the philosophy; we both took steps to protect other influences on our happiness: our health, our property, our jobs. Our feelings for each other were far more important, of course, but wasn't that all the more reason to want to guard them against any threat?

I still believed that using *Lock* was unnecessary, and I couldn't deny that it hurt that Lisa had so little faith in me—but if I loved her, I could put that aside and see things from her point of view. She'd been scarred, she'd been wounded, she'd been betrayed, time after time—she had a *right* to be plagued by doubts. What did I expect her to do—go out and buy herself an implant that would transform her, arbitrarily, into a moronic, grinning optimist?

I could swallow my pride, for her sake.

I made up my mind to agree.

However, having raised the subject, Lisa hadn't mentioned it again. I wondered if merely confessing her thoughts about *Lock* had been cathartic, if she'd never intended to do more than shock me into taking her fears more seriously.

In the hope that this was so, I resisted all temptation to talk about our relationship; instead of wasting time proclaiming my love, I tried to be more demonstrative. I cooked the meals she liked the most. We had sex when and how she wanted it. I sold my video synthesizer to pay for the baby-sitting, and we went out every Saturday night for months. I even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

listened to her talk about her work, and never once let my eyes glaze over.

It's true, I'd done much the same for Alison, and for Maria, when things had been going badly. That had been *different,* though; I'd been young, naïve, pathetically over-confident. It was clear to me, in hindsight, that I'd never been able to give either of them what they wanted. Alison had been looking for an amusing companion who knew his place and minded his own business: a discreet gigolo, nothing more. I believe she eventually found one. Maria had wanted someone who'd treat her like a child—everyone's favorite, gifted, promising twelve-year-old—for the rest of her life. Someone else might have been able to shake her out of it, but I certainly couldn't.

And Lisa? Lisa wanted permanence, stability, fidelity. Which was exactly what I was willing to give.

The wedding of Lisa's younger sister was the turning point. Her mother and father both attended, along with their current lovers. Lisa and I had been married in a registry office, in secret; now I understood why. I cringed as the two progressed from muttered insults to a fully fledged screaming match, and the bride spent most of the day in tears.

Lisa appeared nonchalant, almost amused, at first, but half-way through the reception, I overheard her confronting the bridegroom, telling him he was a worthless bastard who'd last about a week.

That night, we lay in bed in each other's arms, too depressed for either sex or sleep. I kept glancing over at our "wedding photograph" on the bedside table, a cheap two-dimensional Polaroid snapped by an obliging passerby outside the registry office. It was scarcely six months old, but in the moonlight it looked strangely archaic. Lisa's expression was placid, but I wore a foolish grin. It was the grin, I decided, that somehow made the picture seem so dated.

Personally, I didn't think Lisa's parents' behavior had the slightest bearing on the fate of our own marriage. Screw heredity and upbringing; we could make our *own* lives. Lisa saw things differently, though, and it seemed that nothing I'd done in the past few months had changed her outlook. The happier we were now, the further we could sink, that's all.

I put up some token resistance.

"We could never end up like that," I insisted. "We'd never let it happen."

"What do you think? That they sat down one morning and decided to hate each other?"

"No. But we've been warned. We won't fall into the same traps."

"Do you want to hear about my *grand*parents?"

"Not especially."

I thought I'd already made the decision, but I found my resolve waver-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing. For a while, I just held her, trying to think it all through one more time.

Nobody wants to be objective about love, but I had to force myself; how else could I hope to make a rational choice about *Lock?* There was no use pretending that love was some kind of spiritual quality or moral force—while, at the very same time, pondering the virtues of suturing it into place with molecular robots. Whether or not we used the implant, the mere fact that we *could* contemplate doing so had already changed what love was, for us.

So. All the modern ideology about respect and commitment had been grafted onto ancient instincts governing breeding and child rearing. In some species, sex was everything; in our own, because our young took so long to become independent, we'd evolved feelings for our partners which endured far beyond the act of copulation. People talked of couples "expressing their love," by means of sex, and by means of raising children, but the truth was exactly the other way around: that abstract, intellectualized love was nothing but each person's way of rationalizing their instincts, of denying their animal helplessness, of providing motives for their actions which befitted civilized human beings.

All of which was fine by me. To deny the origins of sexual love in reproductive biology would be farcical and self-deluding. I'd never pretended that my wish to make Lisa happy was the unsullied philanthropy of a saint—if it *had* been, I'd have been working in Calcutta or São Paulo, loving everyone equally, not living a pampered middle-class life and thinking only of the two of us, and Sarah. Conceding *that* didn't make me love her any less—but it did seem to make it all the more absurd to be precious about it. That we loved each other was an accident. It wasn't written in the stars. What chance had created, chance could undo—unless we chose to make that impossible.

"Remember what you said about *Lock?*"

She didn't answer straight away, and for a moment I thought: Don't be a fool, she never meant it.

"Of course I remember."

"Is it still what you want?"

Her face was in shadow; I had no idea what she was thinking. It suddenly occurred to me that if only I'd kept my mouth shut, she might never have mentioned *Lock* again.

"Yes."

For a while, I couldn't speak. A voice in my head shrieked gibberish about a strait-jacket for my soul, a leash for my genitals, a barbed-wire fence around the marriage bed. My grin on the wedding photo looked like the rictus of a frozen corpse. I let the reaction run its course, as if it had nothing to do with me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finally, I said, "Then I want it, too. It scares me, but if it's really what you want . . . ?"

She laughed. "Don't be frightened! There's nothing to be afraid of. You already know *exactly* what it's going to be like."

I laughed, too. She was right. Of *course* she was right! What's more, she was plainly happier than she'd been for a very long time, and wasn't that the whole point?

She kissed me, insistently, and I let the ancient instincts take over —but even as I did, I knew that in a way, we'd finally transcended them.

I bought the implants the next day. They were cheaper than I'd expected, just five hundred dollars each—in total, less than four days' salary. The illustration on the packaging showed a tranquil, smiling person of indeterminate gender, inside whose skull was a safe, bejewelled and glowing like some Hollywood Ark of the Covenant, visible through flesh and bone by virtue of its radiance. Above, Harrison Oswald's endorsement read: "*Lock* is the only implant I'd ever think of using! *Lock* is for all of us who *already* have what it takes!"

We read the instructions together. Programming *Lock* was simple; it asked you what you wanted locked, and you told it. There was no risk of the implant failing to interpret the words correctly; it didn't even try to understand them. Having stored a verbal pattern—such as the phrase "My feelings for Lisa"—the implant examined the user's brain, determined which neural pathways were triggered by the pattern, and targeted them for preservation. There was no need for the implant itself to have the faintest concept of what the pattern meant; all that mattered was the meaning to the *user*.

I'd had fears about the nanomachines somehow running amok, forgetting their programming and rampaging through our brains, wreaking their special damage on every single neuron and leaving us worse than dead: trapped in an eternal present, unable to form long-term memories because the neural systems involved had been rendered incapable of change. The instruction booklet, though, reassured me; each nanomachine destroyed itself in the process of altering just one neuron, and there weren't enough of the things in the implant to cripple the whole brain.

We didn't rush into it. We both took leave from work. We borrowed the money to put Sarah into the Center for a fortnight; Lisa didn't like doing that—she found it hard enough to leave her there each day—but we agreed that we needed time to ourselves, without any distractions.

Lisa insisted that we had to "prepare ourselves" before we used the implants. I wasn't sure if this made sense, but I went along with her, for the sake of harmony. Our precise state of mind at the moment we applied

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the implants certainly wasn't important; *Lock* was concerned only with neural connections, which changed on a far slower time scale than the transient electrochemical flashes of thought. Among the existing pathways, there always had been, and always would be, the capacity for a broad variety of instantaneous moods. It was that whole set of *possibilities* (and the likelihood of each one occurring) that we'd be preserving with *Lock*.

Over a period of days, though, perhaps we could strengthen the most desirable pathways, by repeated use, and cause the others to atrophy, if only partially.

The question was: how, in practice, do you optimize your love? Do you sit staring into the eyes of your beloved, whispering sweet inanities? Do you have sex, to feel satisfied, or do you abstain, to feel desire? Do you listen to romantic music? Watch romantic movies? Reminisce about the early days, or plan the endless golden future?

We ended up going out; to movies, to plays, to exhibitions. After all, we decided, love was about doing the things we enjoyed, together, not moping around the house, hoping for a chance moment of transcendental bliss. The twin luxuries of not having to work, and not having to think about Sarah, filled me with a kind of guilty pleasure, but I would have enjoyed myself far more without constantly having to worry about whether I *was*, in fact, strengthening the synapses I was meant to be strengthening, and not—accidentally, subconsciously, or through sheer lack of mental discipline—reinforcing negative modes of thought.

By the end of the fortnight, if Lisa spoke, or smiled, or touched me, and I felt anything less than pure adoration, I'd put myself through absurd contortions, trying to correct my response. All the panic and claustrophobia which I'd thought I'd conquered began to return. Lisa seemed nervous, too, but I didn't dare suggest a postponement. I didn't *want* a postponement; I couldn't face spending one more day so obsessed with monitoring my emotions that they were constantly at risk of disintegrating into nothing but a series of robotic mental twitches. There were only two possibilities: we proceeded on schedule, or we gave up the whole idea—and backing out was unthinkable. Lisa would never have trusted me again. I would have lost her. I had no choice.

The night before, I lay awake, feigning sleep. No doubt Lisa was doing the same. No matter; perfect honesty was hardly what we wanted. Implants were available which could provide it—and all the other aspects of fairy-tale love—but we'd decided to make do with the real thing.

Lying in the dark, breathing with self-conscious tranquility, I thought about the way my life had been, after my second divorce, before I'd met Lisa. Three years of grey stupefaction, hovering between self-pity and numbness. Sitting at home, listening to the radio spewing out songs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about dancing all night long, drinking all night long, or fucking all night long. Me, I never seemed to do anything *all night long*. Least of all sleep.

I knew one thing: I couldn't live like that again. I was no longer sure that I really did care enough about Lisa to do what she'd asked of me, purely for her sake, but somehow this had ceased to be the question. The simple truth was: *I* needed someone, *she* needed someone. It no longer mattered what we felt for each other. I wasn't making any kind of sacrifice; I wasn't doing this to prove my love. It had come down to this: It was better to be in chains than to be alone.

When I woke, this bleak mood had subsided, a little. Just the sight of Lisa in the morning could still make me almost giddy with joy, and remnants of the old, unselfconscious affection—which I'd once felt so effortlessly—returned for a while. We ate breakfast in silence. I smiled so much that my face ached.

When I fetched the implants, my palms were slick with sweat. I remembered how light-hearted I'd been on my wedding day, not nervous at all—but the vow, then, had been nothing but words; this felt more like a suicide pact. That was absurd, though. Who were we killing? We wouldn't change, we wouldn't feel a thing. We were slaughtering the future, but everybody does *that*, a thousand times a day.

"Ben?"

"What?"

"Are you ready? Are you *sure?*"

I grinned at her. *You bitch, don't tempt me.*

"Of course I'm ready. Are you?"

She nodded, then looked away. I took her hand across the table, and said as gently as I could, "This is what you wanted. No more doubts, no more fears."

The implants themselves were the size of grains of sand. With tweezers, we sat them in their programmers, and spoke the words by which they would map our love. Then we placed them in the applicators, ready to poke up our nostrils. From there, they would burrow straight into the brain, and disperse the virus-sized robots which would damage us more subtly then we'd ever been damaged before.

I paused, and tried to compose myself, tried to cast aside my misgivings. What was the point in backing out now? What could I gain? I'd already pinned down my love, stripped it of all context, objectified it irreversibly. Could the nanomachines do worse?

As Lisa raised her applicator, I had a vision of myself leaping to my feet, reaching out, knocking it from her hand. I didn't though. I followed suit, hurriedly, afraid that if I hesitated I'd lose my nerve.

After a few tense seconds, she started sobbing from sheer relief, and I joined her. We stumbled into each other's arm, shuddering and gasping,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tears streaming down our faces. Whatever we'd done, it was over, decided. For now, that was more than enough.

Later, I carried her into the bedroom. We were too drained to make love. We slept for twenty solid hours, and woke just in time to bring Sarah home.

All of this took place fifteen years ago, but at the risk of stating the obvious, very little has changed since.

Of course, I still love Lisa. I still slip up, sometimes, and tell her so, and she treats these declarations as skeptically as ever.

"How long do you think it will last?" she asks.

There's still no right answer. She knows the truth as surely as I do, but—as always—it's powerless to diminish her fears.

Sarah is twenty-four now. She was hell during puberty, almost unmanageable, but lately she's become a real source of joy to us. For all that the doctors declared that she'd have a mental age of eighteen months all her life, there's no doubt whatsoever in my mind that she *has* made progress. Can an infant be considerate, compassionate, selfless? Sarah can. She can still barely talk—but every day, it seems, she finds a new way to express her love for us. Maybe she hasn't "grown up before our eyes" as an ordinary child would have done—but I realize now that, in her own way, she's never stopped moving forward.

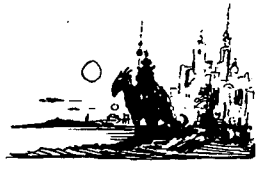
As for *Lock,* I try not to think about it too often. Lisa and I *are* still in love, we're still together. None of our friends' marriages have lasted this long. Surely that's a tangible sign of success; surely that proves . . . something.

Sometimes, though, in the mornings when I stand by the bed, just watching Lisa sleep, I feel what is, unmistakably—perhaps you could even say *literally*—the very same feeling of tenderness (no more, no less) that I've felt a thousand times before, at similar moments stretching back across fifteen years—and which I *know* I'll feel a thousand times again, before I die. And I'm caught between the sense that no time has passed at all, and the conflicting impression that I've been standing, and watching, for something like eternity.

And I think—not with any bitterness, but numbed by a sense of loss that I can't quite delineate, that I can't quite comprehend:

Maybe we aren't on the crest of the wave, but one thing's certain.

It can't—it truly *can't*—get better than this.●



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

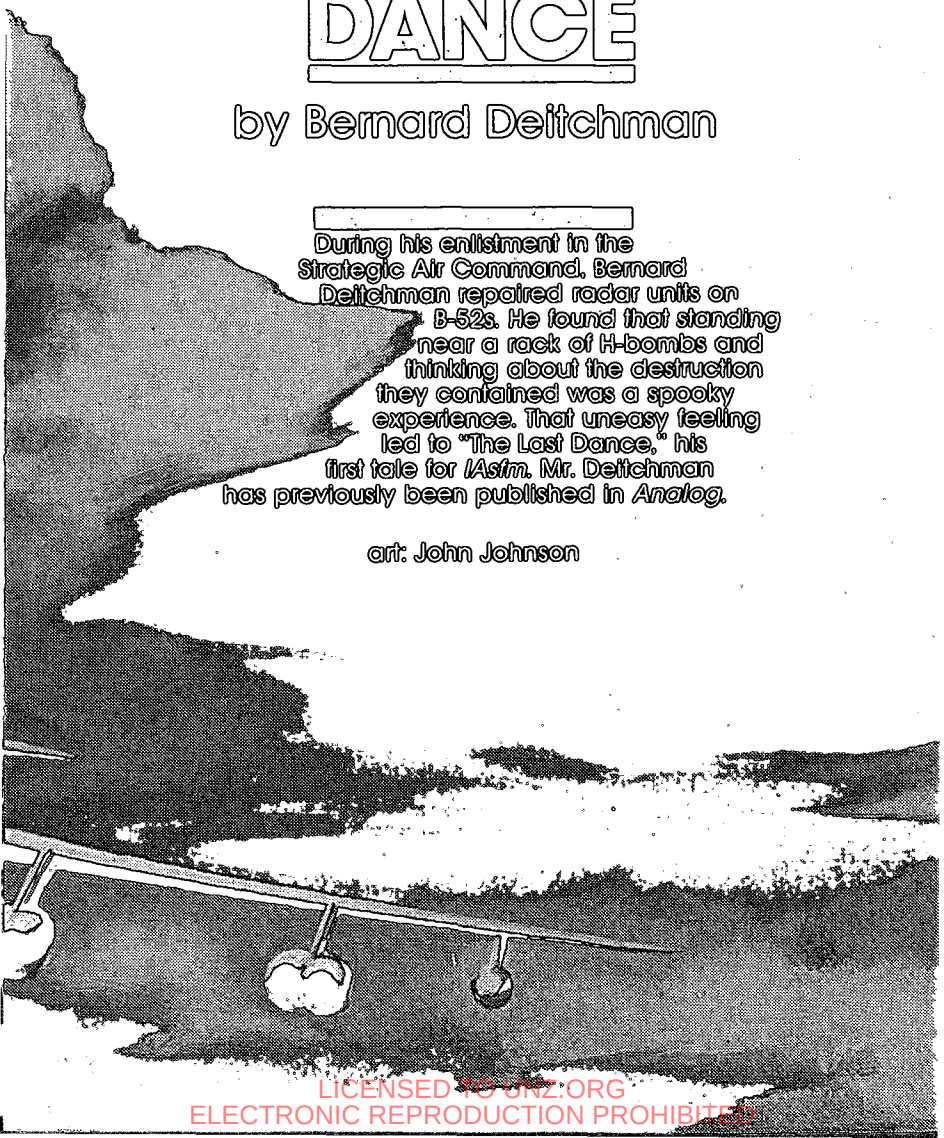
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE LAST DANCE

by Bernard Deitchman

During his enlistment in the Strategic Air Command, Bernard Deitchman repaired radar units on B-52s. He found that standing near a rack of H-bombs and thinking about the destruction they contained was a spooky experience. That uneasy feeling led to "The Last Dance," his first tale for *IAsfm*. Mr. Deitchman has previously been published in *Analog*.

art: John Johnson



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The bomber's tail flexed and creaked in the wind, a hard wind that might have begun in the heart of Siberia and come across Alaska and through Canada, gathering force but not snow, before it roared into the Dakotas. Indians probably had a name for this kind of dry gale, though Bonclaire thought it was enough to know that its force would effectively drop the temperature tonight to thirty below zero.

Banks of arc lamps hung from towers down both sides of the alert pad, all unlighted except for the ones above Bonclaire's B-52 and one other. The rest of the nuclear fleet were light gray, bat-shaped outlines in the night. On a bright-yellow stand that ran like scaffolding around the bomber's gun turret, Fire Control mechanics were fumbling with ammunition chutes, hurrying to get the guns armed so they could return to the A&E Squadron and warm up. They staggered against the wind, ten feet above the concrete parking spot, working awkwardly in heavy parkas and gloves. The barrels of the guns mounted in the turret dipped and swayed above the railing of the stand, like the pens of a seismograph in an earthquake. On the ground, near the blast fence, was the Air Policeman assigned to guard the bomber—or maybe more precisely, the nukes on board it—now that it was armed for a one-way flight upwind to the source.

Bonclaire stood in the doorway of his truck, which was a larger, military version of a delivery van, and sipped coffee. Every shop in the Field Maintenance Squadron, the Munitions Squadron, and all the A&E shops but Fire Control had signed his bomber off, and when Fire Control was done, the B-52—tail number 62-0047—would be officially on alert status, and he too could get warm, in the alert shack.

"Crew Chief!"

Bonclaire looked around. A station wagon, one of those used by flight crews on alert duty, had slipped up behind him. An officer was gesturing to him from the passenger window. As Bonclaire approached the car he recognized the Aircraft Commander of the crew assigned to 047, Major Talley.

"Has Bomb Nav signed off, Sarge?" Talley said.

"Yes, sir. We're hot."

"And what was that malfunction the other day?"

"The Bomb Nav problem? They never found anything, sir."

"The phantom FEO," Talley said. "That's what they're calling it. You sure they didn't leave an evaluator on board by mistake and sneak it off after the airplane landed?"

"Positive, sir. Hasn't been an FEO on this plane in six weeks."

"Strange, a write-up like that."

"Yes, sir. I wanted more time before she went on alert, to let them work with it. But—they signed it off."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, you know the orders. Two more planes because of whatever's going on in Russia, and Job Control thought your plane and 082 were in the best shape. But I do wish Bomb Nav could tell us what that write-up meant."

"I talked to the Seven-Level who was at debriefing—"

"Duncan?" Talley said.

"Yes, sir. He said it was new to him."

"I don't care much for that. Not when we're talking about an airplane as old as a 52."

"No, sir."

"And—just between us—I expect a Tango tonight. The Old Man and Colonel Patham were at the shack a little while ago. Probably still in the area."

Fire Control was putting the cowling on the turret, and the senior member of the team had climbed down and started toward Bonclaire's truck to sign off. Bonclaire excused himself, and Talley said good-night. The officer driving, who Bonclaire saw was Lieutenant Cuervo, the Radar Navigator in Talley's crew, put the car in gear and drove away.

The Fire Control mechanic entered the ammunition totals in the aircraft records, and Bonclaire radioed for a dispatch truck to pick the team up. He helped them pull the tail stand away, hooked it to the rear bumper of his truck, and went to turn off the portable power unit that supplied electricity to the bomber. Then he was alone, except for the Air Police guard. Unless, as Talley expected, the alert force had to Tango—the code word for a practice scramble—047 would sit cold and dead for at least a month. No write-ups, no repairs. Easy money for the crew chief, though boring.

Of course, given the political situation, as Talley said, a Tango was almost certain. And why else would the Wing Commander and one of his senior deputies be prowling around?

Talley was, fortunately, not one of those officers who had a way of implying that all enlisted men stuck together and covered each other's asses when something unexpected happened. Though up to a point, they did. Bonclaire would lie for his assistants, and for a few personal friends among the other crew chiefs, but most A&E troops treated him like a servant, and if some clown in Bomb Nav had left a Flight Evaluator on board during the last training mission without a work order, that was the clown's problem. What Bonclaire had told Talley he knew to be the truth, because he inspected his bomber before and after every flight. Two days ago the mount where an FEO would sit, and the plugs that would connect it to the Bombing Navigation system, had been empty.

Which only made the argument at debriefing all the stranger.

Waiting for the flight crew to arrive, Bonclaire and the six mechanics

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from A&E—one from each shop—stood around the long table and killed time with the usual talk of work, and cold weather, and women, and one not-so-usual topic, the political instability in Russia. A quiet, moody boy named Shore, from the Navigation shop, made a point of ignoring all the sex talk, but seemed to find satisfaction in the possibility of higher alert status. Bonclaire too was curious as to the health and whereabouts of the Soviet President, but knew a bigger question was whether the Red Army, deprived of a strong leader to command its loyalty as it was fighting guerrilla wars with independence movements in several Republics, would fall apart. Still, he saw no reason for the United States to take sides.

"Really, you sinners ought to be looking forward to this," Shore said.

"Forward to what?" Duncan, the tech sergeant from Bomb Nav, said. "Having planes in the air all the time, so they can be busted all the time?"

Neither Duncan nor anyone else took offense at being called a sinner, despite the obvious fact that Shore was not joking. They must hear it from him often, Bonclaire thought.

"No, not that," Shore said. "Armageddon. Because you're always worried about keeping warm, aren't you? So you can fornicate without freezing? Pretty soon you'll have all eternity to be warm—in Hell."

"Oh, fuck, yes," the ECM man said. "While the breezes keep you cool in Heaven."

"You'll never know about *that,* sinner," Shore said.

Fire Control, a man with a deep-South accent, smiled and said, "Ease off, baby, ain't none of us about to meet Jesus today."

"Maybe," Shore said. "But if we do, *I'm* ready."

"Well, if you do," ECM said, "ask him where that Russian is."

Shore looked at him disgustedly, but said nothing. The man from the Communications shop, a staff sergeant too old to still have that rank, said, "Boy in Photo got some ideas on it."

"What boy?" Duncan said.

"Just a boy over there I run with. Said we been takin' pictures all over Russia, like we're chasin' something. I think the Man's on the run, from the rest of the Commies."

"We always take pictures all over Russia," Fire Control said. "That's what we got satellites for."

"And they usually stay put, too. There's this one over a bunch of places I can't pronounce, and it goes over, you know, like we got, Georgia, too—"

"Georgia?" Fire Control said. "Don't need a satellite to take pictures of Georgia."

"Not *our* Georgia," Communications said.

"They got one, too?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yeah, they do."

"Are their Georgians any smarter than ours?" ECM said.

"Forget it. I only said Georgia 'cause it's the one name that makes sense. The point is, this satellite used to hang over one spot, now it's movin' around."

"Just huntin' up some peaches," Duncan said.

"Aw, fuck you people. Try to tell you something—"

"In south Russia, they don't have many real Christians," Shore put in.

"Just like our Georgia," ECM said.

The flight crew's bus pulled up. The mechanics sat down along their side of the table, and Bonclaire took his position at the head of it. Because their systems were the most complicated and unpredictable, and produced malfunctions difficult to describe in writing, the shops in the Armament and Electronics Squadron, unlike those in the other maintenance squadrons, were required to send mechanics to every debriefing for face-to-face discussions of write-ups with the crew. The crew chief attended both to conduct and referee, which was sometimes a delicate job, as all the crew but the gunner were officers.

The Radar Navigator, whose title on earlier and simpler airplanes would have been Bombardier, was the first crewman through the door. He was a young major, and as he threw his work orders across at Duncan he said, "I believe you people forgot something out there."

Duncan read the topmost sheet as the rest of the crew came in and sat down. He looked at Bonclaire and said, "Was this an FEO mission?"

"It's your system, Sarge," the RN said. "Don't you know?"

"Nothing on board," Bonclaire said.

"But we got one anyway," the RN said.

"What do you mean?" Duncan said.

"I mean it ran a course, a plot almost to release. I couldn't clear the screen of all these false ground returns. Landscape everywhere, target returns, and we were in the middle of the goddamned ocean!"

"But you saw land?" Duncan said.

"On my scope, not out the window. I wouldn't be surprised if it hadn't happened before, over land, and we never noticed. But you couldn't miss it, over the ocean."

The Aircraft Commander, another major, said calmly, "I came down and had a look myself, Sarge. Very strange. None of the other sets showed it. I mean, if it was some kind of weather problem, inversion or something, it wasn't on the Nav set or out back on Fire Control—"

The AC was trying to keep things orderly, to say, it's just another write-up, and Bonclaire appreciated that, even though he knew that no weather looked like land. And before the RN could say so, Duncan said, "Uh, was ECM transmitting?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The mechanic from Electronic Counter Measures said, "We don't do landscapes."

All the flight crew but the RN laughed politely. They wanted no lengthy argument, only to get the debriefing over with and go home. The RN said, "Right, no landscapes. Not even if ECM was malfunctioning. You people had better check it out. The system was useless."

"Yes, sir," Duncan said.

The rest of the write-ups were covered quickly, and the flight crew left. Bonclaire said to Duncan, "I expect to see you out there for a while."

"Yeah, damn it. And I had a little something lined up for tonight, if this bird came in clean. But I guess this way I'll be saved from fornicatin' while it's freezin'."

Despite an hour or so fiddling with it, Duncan had found nothing wrong with 047's Bomb Nav system, and he had probably even been able to keep his date that night, which was fine with Bonclaire. Unfortunately, Bonclaire thought as he unlocked the master switchboard for the light towers, malfunctions do not go away. They always come again, some worse day.

He cut power to the lights. Except for the lines of small red lamps that marked the taxiway to the head of the main runway, and the headlights of his truck, he was in darkness. The other newly added bomber, 082, was also buttoned up. He got in the truck and towed the Fire Control stand to the alert shack.

The shack was a low, windowless bunker that housed the flight crews who were on alert duty. It hardly lived down to its name, being made of steel and concrete, and containing sleeping quarters, a chow hall, library, television room, and game room. Approaching the shack, Bonclaire saw a dispatch truck parked near the upper entrance, and he assumed it was there to pick up the Fire Control people. Then, behind it, he saw a second truck, which had a large red circle—like a Japanese Zero—on its side. The Line Chief. Bonclaire stopped with his door alongside the Line Chief's, and he saw van Ruik at the wheel. They both rolled their doors open, and van Ruik said over the wind, "I was about to call you."

"We're all signed off."

"You wish! I got Bomb Nav here with a write-up."

"Bullshit. They cleared it a couple of hours ago."

"Job Control has an open work order. Sent them out on a Red Ball. You got to open up again."

"Rip, that has to be an old order, and somebody didn't sign it off with JC. My records are clear."

Van Ruik turned to talk to someone inside the truck, then said to Bonclaire, "Order's signed by the duty officer at JC. Ain't that cute? Since when do they run Bomb Nav systems?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Since never. Maybe he signed it, but somebody else initiated it."

He meant the RN on the last training flight, who was not on alert duty, and was all nice and cozy and warm at home.

The Line Chief said, "That so? Then I suppose you can tell me what it says?"

"System has false targets. Ghosts."

"Well, bingo! *Does* it have false targets?"

"Duncan says no."

"Duncan ain't here tonight. They sent two Five-Levels. Take 'em out, will you?"

The request was an order, coming from a chief master sergeant who was also the ranking enlisted man in the organization, but Bonclaire had to say, "This is a pain, Rip. We've got bombs on board."

"That's the only kind of airplanes I know, Sarge. They find something wrong, I'll have Munitions back out here, too. Now let's move it. I expect my dance card to be filled, about any time."

Bonclaire nodded. Two young airmen first class got out of van Ruik's truck and into his. Bonclaire left the Fire Control stand in its parking place and returned to his bomber.

Lights. Power. A quick ID check by the AP. Bonclaire went up with the two mechanics to 047's nav deck, the lower story of the two-story airplane. The mechanics sat side by side, one in the RN's seat and the other in the Navigator's, and powered up their system. Bonclaire watched from the Gunner's seat behind them. Down here there were no windows, only several radar screens and the Gunner's television screen.

The Bomb Nav radar began its sweep.

"Damn, what is this stuff?" one of the mechanics said.

The bright green moving line should have left only blankness behind it when the bomber was on the ground. Even Bonclaire knew that. But the screen was not blank. The hard, fine-grained patterns that only good solid earth could produce covered it. Geographic features—hills and canyons, stream or river beds, possibly vegetation—were obvious. And the picture was moving, as if the bomber were in flight.

The mechanic in the Navigator's seat said, "You got an FEO on board, Sarge?"

Bonclaire was tired of that question, but kept his patience and said, "No, there's something else wrong."

But how had that RN known it? Bonclaire remembered the man's comment at debriefing—until the bomber flew over water, nobody knew this was happening—and suspected that was what had caused him to initiate the work order. He said, "And maybe it's been wrong for a long time."

"Never happened on the ground, though. Until now."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Then it's getting worse. I want you to go out to my truck," Bonclaire said to the man in the Navigator's seat, "and call Job Control. Tell them we have a repeat and I want a Seven-Level out here—Duncan, if he isn't out chasing a skirt."

"He's not. He's working on another airplane."

"Good. Tell them I want him. A Red Ball has priority."

"Roger," the mechanic said, and climbed down the hatchway steps. Bonclaire took his place in the Navigator's seat. He said to the other mechanic, "Tell me something. I thought radar couldn't pick up targets on the ground?"

"It can't, Sarge. The receivers are blocked, by a kind of electronic switch. Otherwise they'd get burned out by the real strong returns they'd get from all the concrete just a couple of feet away, because they're real sensitive. You know, they have to be, so they can pick up returns from stuff miles away. A couple of feet from the ground, that's like having a jet engine wind up a couple of feet from your ears."

"So where's this picture coming from?"

"Looks like an FEO."

"I've been through that, Airman. Too many times. We don't have an FEO on board."

"Well, let me fool with it until Sergeant Duncan gets here—"

The other mechanic returned, saying Duncan was on his way. They waited in silence as the wind slammed into the bomber, occasionally with enough force to make the nose rock, and watched the landscape on the radar screen gradually change from one form to another—plains to hills, to mountains, to a mixture of plains and sharp ridges. Once the edge of a body of water passed along the top of the screen. Where was this place they were seeing? And how was its image reaching the radar if it was not one of the artificial, computer-generated scenes of a Flight Evaluator's bombing run?

"Hello! Bonclaire!" a voice came up through the hatchway, not Duncan's voice but van Ruik's. "I heard Bomb Nav on the radio. What's wrong?"

"What the work order says," Bonclaire yelled down. "Come up and see for yourself."

The stairwell to the flight deck ran through the nav deck, leaving little floor space for two men to stand, so Bonclaire moved to the Gunner's seat and van Ruik watched the screen from the Navigator's. The Line Chief said, "Then this airplane is broke?"

"Depends what you call broke," Bonclaire said. "It works, but it's seeing things. Having nightmares, maybe."

Van Ruik frowned. "Airplanes don't have nightmares. Can it taxi if there's a Tango tonight?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I guess," Bonclaire said. "No reason not to, but if they wanted it to fly—"

"Fly? Don't say that word. If they fly, we'll be in a Condition Yellow, and I don't need that at my age. Where is that damned Russian, anyway?"

"Probably dead," said the mechanic operating the radar. "They had enough of him."

"Or they locked him up," the other mechanic said.

"Naw, they probably poisoned him, and now they're going to invade Poland."

"Not Poland. They got problems inside Russia."

"Wherever. All those places look the same to—shitfire! What is that?"

Bonclaire stood up and leaned across the stairwell. A straight bright line was speeding across the screen. He said, "Is it a missile?"

"I guess. Never seen anything like it. I mean, they sure don't have this on an FEO run."

The streak was headed directly for the center of the screen—for the bomber—for them. The compartment was silent but for the noise of the wind in the hatchway, so silent that Bonclaire realized everyone, himself included, was holding his breath as he watched. They were reacting as if they were actually under fire.

The missile reached the center of the screen and passed on through it. Van Ruik said, "Ivan missed!"

"ECM must have faked it out," the mechanic standing behind him said. The streak faded away at the edge of the screen and van Ruik said, "One down."

"Hey," Bonclaire said. "In case you people haven't noticed, we're still on the ground."

"Tell that to your airplane, Sarge," van Ruik said.

"I thought you said you were too old—"

"Anybody home?" someone called from outside. This time it was Duncan. He climbed up, had a look at the radar screen, said, "I don't believe it."

"That ain't the worst of it," the mechanic operating the system said. "We had a missile fired at us!"

Duncan looked at Bonclaire and van Ruik. "I guess it missed?"

"ECM got it," van Ruik said. "And we don't even have a crew on board, no EWO to run it."

Duncan smiled, a small, quick smile, and he said, "That is something new, Rip. Automatic EWO to go with the automatic pilot. I can see why you're happy as a pig in shit."

Nobody laughed. Duncan's tone was closer to being sarcastic than humorous, closer to being disrespectful of van Ruik's rank than Bonclaire

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever dared to come. But he knew that Duncan and van Ruik bar-crawled together, and he assumed that gave Duncan more leeway than other junior NCOs would have.

"Is it all that bad, Dunk?" van Ruik said.

"Don't you know—" Duncan began, then hesitated and said to his mechanics, "Go on out to Sergeant van Ruik's truck and treat yourselves to some of his coffee. The only way so many people could be in here is if some of you were women."

The mechanics left, reluctantly, and Duncan took the RN's seat. "My boys have never seen this before—"

He pointed to two lines of numbers displayed on the top of the screen.

"—so they don't know what it means, but I thought you might, Rip."

"Some kind of navigation fix?"

"No, those are Black Bag numbers."

"Oh, shit, no!"

A sudden empty feeling hit Bonclaire's guts. Black Bag numbers were the top secret sets of code numbers kept separately under lock and key by the Aircraft Commander and the RN. Put together only with permission from SAC headquarters during a Condition Red and fed into the Bomb Nav computers, they would instruct the crew what their targets in the Soviet Union were, and what course to fly to reach them. Permission to unlock the codes could not be given until the bomber was in flight.

"We're on the ground," van Ruik said. "We don't even have a crew—"

"Yeah, I heard that before," Duncan said. "Those are still Black Bag numbers."

"Where are they coming from?" Bonclaire said. "Where is any of this coming from?"

"I don't know, but one thing's for certain: you better call MMS and tell them to take their nukes home. We can't have bombs on an airplane like this."

"There's a Tango coming," van Ruik said. "Tonight."

"Well, this airplane's a wallflower."

"Aw, hell, why didn't you find this before?" van Ruik said.

"It wasn't here before. I have never seen such a—malfunction isn't the word for it."

"But I'll—look! That's what we saw. Jesus, three of them! We're in shit now."

Duncan said, "Rip, this is not real. I can shut the whole system—"

"No, don't do that!" van Ruik said, as Duncan reached toward a switch. "I want to see what happens."

Duncan shrugged. "Okay."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What happened was that two of the streaks in the triangular formation converged on the third, and all of them vanished in a burst of light.

"Hot damn! ECM again!" van Ruik said. "Fooled two of them into thinking the third was the target."

Bonclaire took a breath, said, "I'll call JC and ask for some Munitions people out here."

"And put some fire under them," Duncan said. "Tell them we've got a Broken Arrow."

"No way!" van Ruik said. Then to Bonclaire, "Cancel that, Sarge. Nothing wrong with the bombs."

"Roger," Bonclaire said, and ducked down through the hatchway before anybody could say anything else.

The wind hit him and blew him away from the bomber, toward his truck. Even the weather was getting anxious, urging him to hurry. In the truck, he poured himself fresh coffee as he made the call to Job Control. He said nothing about a Broken Arrow, but asked them to notify the flight crew assigned to his bomber that it could not respond to a Tango.

The two Bomb Nav troops came over from van Ruik's truck and asked Bonclaire what the system was doing. He said, "Same as before. Hasn't nuked anything, yet."

"Did Sergeant Duncan have any orders for us?"

"No. Better stay here—"

He paused as he heard a deeper, steadier whine rising above the wind's howl. The sound of a Klaxon. The Tango was on. In a few seconds the sound had reached full volume, and van Ruik came scrambling out of 047 and ran toward his truck. He looked as angry and deprived as a small child who'd lost his favorite toy. "The bastards couldn't wait a little while longer!" he yelled as he passed Bonclaire. Then he got in his truck and headed off toward the alert shack, to see that all the rest of his crew chiefs were rolling.

"Now you'd better go keep Sergeant Duncan company," Bonclaire said to the mechanics. They knew what he meant. Under SAC's Two Man Policy, no one was allowed inside an armed bomber alone. They picked up their tool bags and jogged to 047 and climbed up inside.

Trucks raced down the line of bombers. In quick order, all the banks of lights came on, followed by the roar of power units and air compressors. The crew chiefs were followed by flight crews in their station wagons. Watching the crews run to their airplanes, Bonclaire felt frustrated, disappointed. In the midst of all this activity, he had nothing to do, and decided he might as well call Job Control and suggest that 047 be taken off alert duty entirely, until Bomb Nav could cure what ailed it.

The radio was crowded with traffic, though, and he had to wait. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stared up at 047, saw motion in the cockpit, shadows under the dim ceiling lamps. Duncan or one of his mechanics must have gone up to the flight deck. To look at the AC's instruments, to see if they showed what the RN's scope did? Bonclaire wondered what a good, detailed map of Asia—of Siberia—would tell them, if it would match up with the terrain they had seen on radar, and identify the country 047 was flying over in its dreams.

Thunder. Fifteen bombers—no, seventeen, with the two additions and minus Bonclaire's—were cranking up eight engines each. The noise of the Klaxons and the ground units, every other sound, vanished in their roar. That roar was a pressure he could feel in his chest, something he swallowed along with the foul smell of burning kerosene from the bombers' exhausts. Black smoke, the product of stone-cold engines, hit the blast fences and rolled back over the line, where the wind caught it and whipped it up into the lights.

All down the line, green and red running lights came on, blinking, and then the landing lights of the bombers on the other side of the pad. He saw other crew chiefs disappear in that blinding glare as they ran to pull wheel chocks free. And over the radio, van Ruik announced, "Control, Alert One. We are cookin' and ready to roll!"

"I wish," Bonclaire muttered. Then his mood worsened as he saw a station wagon speed into his parking spot, hurrying to get off the taxiway before the alert force took possession of it. Major Talley and Lieutenant Cuervo were back. Bonclaire cursed to himself, and went to meet them.

He was tempted to salute them, as a kind of apology—because ordinarily no one saluted officers on the flight line—for the condition of his airplane. But the wind forced them to keep a hand on their caps, and returning a salute would have been awkward. Bonclaire said to Talley, "I'm sorry for this mess, sir. Bomb Nav bought the repeat. Can't use the system."

"Somebody working on it?"

"Yes, sir. Sergeant Duncan."

First Lieutenant Cuervo, a thin, Latin-looking man, said, "A repeat on the phantom FEO?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let's have a look," Talley said.

Bonclaire led the way to the hatch. There he looked up and saw both mechanics were on the nav deck with Duncan, and he yelled at them to come down. It took two tries to get their attention, and when they climbed out they seemed confused by the lights and noise, as if, with their attention on the radar screen, they had forgotten the Tango outside.

Bonclaire told them to wait in his truck. The two officers went up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ahead of him, and as he started after them he heard Cuervo say, "Black Bags? What the hell's going on?"

"It's the damnedest thing, sir," Duncan said.

The RN sat down beside Duncan, which left enough room for Bonclaire to stand beside Talley. The radar was still showing ground returns—flat ground all across the screen.

"Anything exciting happen while I was gone?" he said to Duncan.

"Well, no more missiles, but—"

"Missiles?" Talley said. "What are you talking about?"

"Streaks on the screen, sir. Came right at us, but looked like they got faked out by ECM," Duncan said.

"None of this makes sense," Talley said. "We're on the *ground*."

"Where'd those numbers come from?" Cuervo said.

"Don't know, sir."

Cuervo turned to Talley, said, "Those numbers aren't in the current series. They're somewhere farther down the track."

Talley stared at the screen, then said, "Yeah, a few dozen farther down. A few weeks, at a guess."

"Maybe a month," Cuervo said.

"Excuse me, sir," Duncan said to Talley. "I don't see Black Bags too often. What do you mean by a few weeks?"

"The codes all have ID numbers, and they run in a series," Talley said. "The series cycles regularly, and if you know how often it does, you can guess when any code might come up. We haven't reached the place in the series where these codes are, probably won't for a while."

"A month," Cuervo said again.

"But if the crew doesn't have those numbers yet—" Bonclaire said.

"They shouldn't be in the computers," Talley said. "Of course, *no* numbers should be in the computers."

"These are flight instructions for the future?" Duncan said.

"They will be," Cuervo said. "But how did you get them?"

"I didn't, sir. They were here when I arrived."

Cuervo shook his head. "Somebody put them in the system. They're not a malfunction, they're real. The system is running a plot with them."

"This is kind of scary," Talley said. "We ought to declare a Broken Arrow."

"I suggested that, sir," Duncan said. "The Line Chief said no."

"MMS is on the way out for the bombs," Bonclaire said.

Cuervo said to Duncan, "What else did you see besides missiles? You started to say something to the Crew Chief."

"Yes, sir. Passed a small town—that is, a small town went by on the edge of the screen, just before you all came up. To the north. Then we—or the system—got our bearings and changed course slightly."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A landmark?" Talley said. "I'd like to see a few—"

To the right of the screen, a control panel lit up with red, a column of lights that Bonclaire had never before seen switched on, and his mouth went dry with fear. Cuervo said, "Jesus, no!" and at the same time Bonclaire heard a clicking noise upstairs in the cockpit. The red lights blinked once, twice, and died. The radar screen went blank.

"What did you do, Sergeant?" Talley said to Duncan. "Those indicators were hot."

"Me, sir? Nothing. Just a relay hung up somewhere," Duncan said, though his voice sounded frightened.

"Were the bombs armed? Even for a few seconds?"

"Impossible, sir. But relays can get stuck, and then they get unstuck. The indicators were lying."

A relay, Bonclaire said to himself. Is that what he had heard from the flight deck, the sound of a relay stuttering between open and closed? Maybe. Obviously no one else seemed to think the noise meant much, or maybe, in the shock of seeing the bomb counters come up red, they had not noticed it at all.

"That was a Broken Arrow," Cuervo said.

"Yes, sir. I'll tell MMS everything that happened when they take the bombs off," Duncan said.

Bonclaire put a hand on the highest rung of the ladder that he could reach. He looked up through the ladder well toward the flight deck, and realized with surprise that the only sound he heard was the wind. The rest of the alert force had taxied toward the runway, and he had not noticed.

He said to Duncan, "Did you go upstairs earlier?"

"No, why? Think we should check the counters at the AC's position?"

"Did one of your troops go up?"

"No, we all stayed down here."

"I thought I saw somebody—or maybe just a shadow—somebody moving around up there, when I was outside."

Duncan looked up the ladder and said, "Like we got a saboteur on board? But nobody can arm bombs by himself, and anyway, they weren't armed."

"Yeah," Bonclaire said, and though he felt uneasy, he started up the ladder.

Talley said, "Uh, Sarge, maybe we should get the Air Police to go first."

"Just a quick look, sir. Can't really be anybody else on board." Bonclaire went up one rung. "The airplane's had APs with it all along."

Two more rungs. Three, and his head was above the edge of the flight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deck. He looked forward into the cockpit. The AC's chair, and the Co-Pilot's, in the glare of the alert pad lights that came through cockpit windows, were empty.

"Nobody home," Bonclaire said.

"Can you see the bomb counters?" Duncan said.

Bonclaire pulled himself higher. The lights on the AC's instrument panel corresponding to the ones they had seen flash red on the nav deck, were dead. "Everything's cold, nice and cold."

He turned his head toward the rear of the deck. The Electronics Warfare Officer's position was unoccupied, too. The flight deck was empty, but still somehow not normal.

The difference was a smell. A faint, unidentifiable odor. It was nothing like the ordinary smells inside an airplane, of fuel and hydraulic fluid, of aftershave and human sweat, of hot metal and plastic in the electronics gear. He realized he could not even classify it as natural or man-made, or name anything it reminded him of. It was something perfectly strange, and just as perfectly out of place in a B-52, where nothing should be strange to him.

He shivered. Someone had been in the cockpit, though no one could have been, and left this smell behind.

The bomber swayed in a powerful gust of wind, and Bonclaire braced his legs against the ladder well. A second jolt. He heard a creaking groan from farther back in the plane, as if the frame itself were flexing, and this was followed by the clicking noise he had heard from below. This time there was no doubt as to its precise source: the AC's position. When he looked forward he saw what had happened without being told by Duncan—"Shitfire, they're hot!"—but could not explain it. The red lights were glowing up here too, steadily. The bombs, they said, were armed. And yet the cockpit was empty.

Bonclaire stared wildly around the flight deck. Below his feet, Cuervo was saying, "Targets again! Town like—Jesus, we're on the way up for a drop. See it? Definitely climbing."

Talley said, "Could be. These damned lights—you better shut the whole thing down, Sarge."

Bonclaire did not hear Duncan's answer. He had pulled himself completely up onto the flight deck. Insane as it was, he expected someone or something to have materialized from thin air, if there were targets on the screen again and the bomb counters read hot. But the cockpit was empty, and the strange smell was fading. Or could someone be in the AC's chair, someone so small that he could not be seen from behind the chair's wide metal back?

In a half-crouch—the usual posture under the low ceiling of the flight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deck—Bonclaire moved cautiously forward. The smell was barely noticeable. He reached the AC's chair and peered slowly around it.

Nothing. No one. It made no sense.

"Sergeant Bonclaire!" Talley yelled up the ladder well.

"Yes, sir?"

"Are the counters red up there?"

"Uh—yes, sir!"

"Okay, we're shutting the system down!"

Bonclaire nodded to himself. Had to be safe. The bombs couldn't be hot, but who would want to find out the hard way, if the system attempted to drop them? Nonetheless, he wished he could see what would happen next. The system might clear the problem up again by itself.

Or had it cleared the problem up by itself, the first time he heard the clicking? Suddenly he saw what did make sense, because the system had acted up before this—in flight—with a full crew on board, and no one had seen any saboteurs. Whoever had left the odd smell behind in the cockpit must have been there to shut the phantom bomb run off, since it could apparently start without help. But once that person—person?—left the airplane, the run resumed.

So, if the Bomb Nav system remained on, and the run was allowed to proceed while Bonclaire watched on the flight deck, what would he see?

He went to the ladder well, hoping it was not too late to convince Talley to delay shutting the system down, when he heard van Ruik's voice saying, "Eighty seconds? Cut it off, Duncan!"

"The fucker won't cut off!" Duncan said. "I can't even pull the circuit breakers, they won't come out! What the fuck is wrong with this airplane?"

"What's wrong is what you didn't fix the last time," van Ruik said, and his voice was frightened, no longer thrilled by the behavior of 047. "Why didn't you fix it then? How did you let it get this bad? Bet me, we're gonna have a Congressional investigation when they—"

"You'd need Einstein to fix this plane. We're only GIs."

"Argue about it later," Talley said. "We've got sixty-five seconds to drop. Cut the power unit."

"Yes, sir," van Ruik said. "Where's the Crew Chief?"

"Up here," Bonclaire said. It was far too late for anything more. What he did say, coming from an unexpected direction, startled van Ruik, who cursed and said, "Do it myself."

"Wait up," Bonclaire said, as a new idea occurred to him. "That plug needs work. You might knock yourself across the pad."

"Well, move it!"

Bonclaire came down the ladder, squeezed between Talley and van Ruik, and as he had hoped, heard the click of relays from the flight deck.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Damn me to hell, it's gone again!" Duncan said.

And somebody was upstairs. Bonclaire shivered. His experiment had worked, but now what?

He looked at his watch. The screen no longer displayed the data for a bomb run, but he estimated there were fifty seconds left to drop. He had to keep the system on that long. Though the risk was probably insane, he wanted to know what was going to happen, what the reason for all this was.

Talley said to Duncan, "Can you shut it off?"

"I didn't try, but—"

"Excuse me, sir," Bonclaire said, looking over Duncan's shoulder. The red lights were cold. "The problem sounds like it's in the cockpit, whatever it is. Since the bombs aren't armed, maybe I should go up again and see what those counters look like. I mean, I heard—"

"The relays, right. I don't know. I've had about enough of this. What do you think, Sarge?" Talley said to van Ruik.

Bonclaire stole a look at his watch. Thirty seconds.

Van Ruik said to Duncan, "Will it prove anything?"

"Who knows? Can't hurt, I guess."

"A quick look," Bonclaire said, already climbing the ladder, because he knew he would lose his nerve with further hesitation.

Twenty seconds.

Cuervo said, "If that plot starts again, we'll be too close to drop to cut it off. See what the circuit breakers will do."

Bonclaire had a hand on the top rung. Trying not to think about what he was doing, he heaved himself past the top of the ladder well and onto the floor of the flight deck, where he was swallowed up in total darkness.

Someone had cut power, he told himself. But the pad lights should still be shining into the cockpit. Then the strange smell hit him, fresh and strong, and a roaring noise burst over him from the direction of the cockpit, as if the wind had broken into the plane, and Bonclaire pulled back, terrified. Whatever was happening, couldn't be. Heart pounding, arms shaking, he groped for the ladder, but then, with a jolt and—impossibly—a rolling motion, the bomber rose beneath him. The floor pressed against his knees and palms. The plane felt as it would if it were climbing and turning, after a bomb had been dropped.

Light. He cried out, expecting the solar brilliance of a nuclear explosion, but this was just the ordinary glow of the cockpit lamps. The roaring had flowed into the rear of the flight deck, and beyond, echoing outside the pressurized crew compartment. And as the wind passed, Bonclaire heard from it a voice that said, "You will bear the mark."

"What? What mark? Who—"

No answer. Vibrating in the skin and frame of the bomber, the wind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was at first louder than the sound of the engines, but faded quickly and was gone.

Bonclaire saw motion at the right edge of his vision, and started. He had company, but who was it? He dared to turn his head slightly. An officer whose name he could not remember was in the EWO's seat. He was the EWO in Talley's crew, that much Bonclaire did know, and he was flicking switches, turning dials, watching his scopes with a concentration Bonclaire had never seen before, the concentration of a man tending his systems of deception in combat for the first and almost certainly the last time. He seemed unaware that he was being watched, or that Bonclaire had spoken, or that a phantom wind had come howling threats in the compartment behind him.

Bonclaire looked toward the cockpit. Both positions were occupied. The AC spoke, and Bonclaire recognized Talley's voice. From his tone, Bonclaire could tell he was excited, and also frightened. After all the years of practice, Talley could not yet believe that he had dropped a hydrogen bomb, that he was at war. And what was the target? Where were they flying over?

"And how did I get here?" Bonclaire said aloud.

No one noticed this question, either. "Am I here?"

Less than completely. The crewmen could not hear him, and when he touched the EWO on the shoulder, the shoulder felt solid but its owner did not sense the touch.

Bonclaire went to look down the ladder well. The nav deck was also fully manned. The B-52 was a perfectly normal bomber—with the wind and the strange smell gone—in flight sometime in the future, with its crew waiting for the end of the world, and Bonclaire an invisible spectator on board.

Cuervo and the Navigator were discussing what they saw on their radars, speaking mostly in numbers. Cuervo's voice was tense almost to breaking. The conversation stopped for a few seconds, then Cuervo said, "You can see the edge of the sea now, and the river."

"Roger," the Navigator said.

"Couple of million people upstream," Cuervo said.

"Out of range of the blast—"

"But if the wind—if it's blowing the wrong way, we're going to dust them—"

His voice did break. Though he was acting under orders, Cuervo was not resigned to mass murder. Then, his voice controlled again, he said into his microphone, "Thirty-five seconds, sir."

Talley answered, "Roger. Presently fifty-five K."

A big city on a river, close to where the river flowed into a sea. They

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were downstream from nowhere, for all that information meant to Bonclaire.

Was there meaning in any of this? It could be taken as a message, a warning, if it really was a picture of the future, if what he saw was truly going to happen. But who was showing it to him?

Not the voice that spoke from the wind, he thought. That was the enemy, the force that tried to interrupt the message by stopping the bomb run back in the past, when 047 was still on the ground. Somebody else, also from this future, was responsible for the warning.

From a month or so in the future? Who was going to have that kind of technology by then—by now? Nobody. The warning came from a much farther future—a future centuries past a nuclear war—to try to stop that war.

Bonclaire crept forward to the cockpit. Unseen by Talley, he looked out of the windshield. The view was all sky and clouds and sunlight. The bomber was climbing too steeply for the ground to be visible.

Cuervo's voice crackled in Talley's headset, "Twenty-five seconds, sir, to detonation."

"Twenty-five. Roger," Talley said. To the co-pilot he said, "I used to have nightmares about this. I never told the shrinks—"

"Yeah? I think it's sweets for the sweet," the co-pilot said.

"What?"

"It takes a nuke to kill a nuke, like they said at the briefing, and if the Russians can't keep control of their own bombs, and their own people—"

"A few people," Talley said. "One renegade command."

"But their own god-damned *Army,* selling nukes, to whatever terrorists they can get the most oil money from, for a civil war against people like us—Christians. And even before, selling stuff all along, tanks, planes, you name it."

"Well, that was to *us*—to the CIA, anyway."

"So?" the co-pilot said. "Can you see yourself selling a 52 to the KGB? A miserable country. Who else is going to stop them, if not us?"

"I just wish it wasn't *me.*"

"—nine—eight—seven—"

Cuervo reached the count of four, and his voice quavered and fell silent. Everyone would finish it for himself, and as Bonclaire did he remembered the white belly, the pure white belly of the bomber, painted to reflect the heat from a nuclear explosion, or so the unofficial theory went in SAC. Now that he was about to see the theory tested, a coat of paint as protection against the fury of a one-megaton bomb, even at fifty-five thousand feet, sounded so foolish he was amazed he had ever believed it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At zero, they heard nothing, and for an instant felt nothing, until the bomber was hit by a rolling uplift of turbulence. But the sun was below them, a new sun casting shadows upward, and brighter than the sun in the sky. Bonclaire closed his eyes. The darkness behind his lids danced with flecks of colored light, and streaks of white fire. The bomber was transparent to the heart of the new sun, the star several miles wide, whose radiation went straight to the inner parts of Bonclaire's eyes.

Abruptly the radiation was gone, and with it the motion of flight and the sound of engines. He opened his eyes to dim light coming through the windshield, and silence. The cockpit was empty. The air in the compartment had a stale, dusty smell. He saw that the light outside was from a few weak bulbs hanging high in the metal rafters of a large building. A hangar.

"Now what?" he whispered to himself.

"No more," a calm voice said behind him. "This is all you will see."

He jerked around. Fighting to control terror, he stared into the darkness at the rear of the flight deck, searching for whoever had spoken. To his relief, the darkness covered everything.

"Who are you?"

"I may not tell you, unless you choose to stay here," the voice said. Neither definitely male nor female, it was so different from the harsh voice in the wind that he decided the speaker was a friend, the source of the warning about war.

"Stay where? Where are we?"

"A museum."

"So the war is over? What's the date today, where we are?"

"You may not know that, if you decide you want me to send you home again."

"I already know—"

"About the war. That was the message received on the radar screen, and it is all you should know. But you came up to the cockpit and nearly met what could have destroyed you, and so you complicated my problems. Even if you do go home, you will, as you heard, bear a mark."

"Why?"

"It is what I had to do, to save you."

"But what kind of mark?" Bonclaire said, and ran his right hand over his face. Everything felt the same as always.

"You will know, if you return."

"That's not fair."

"It is the Law. You must decide, in the way you decided to climb the ladder the second time—that is, without knowledge—because when you did that you reached a place where only the Law matters, and knowledge is meaningless."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But I don't know what Law you're talking about."

"No, you are without benefit of it, and that is why you must bear a mark."

"I can't solve your riddles. I want to go back."

"*So be it.*"

Darkness again, but not silence. Bonclaire heard the familiar noises of a parked, powered-up bomber, the hum of electronics systems, the whirrings of fans and blower motors, and smelled the familiar odors of life rather than the dead air of a museum. But the lights were out.

"Bonclaire!" Van Ruik yelled from below. "Are you all right? What's going on? We got the breakers out! Is everything off up there?"

"I can't tell," Bonclaire said, and he knew what the mark was.

"What do you mean?"

He felt tears on his face. He could not answer, could not say, *I'm blind.* Curiosity, the need to find out who was in the cockpit, had cost him his sight.

He put his hands to his face, rubbed his eyes. Nothing.

He heard someone on the ladder. He raised his head, heard van Ruik gasp and say, "Jeeeezus! What happened to your eyes?"

"I don't know," Bonclaire said, crying. "What do they look like?"

"White, all white, nothing else. Mother of God, what happened up here? Can't be any radiation, we pulled all the breakers, the bombs couldn't start to go!"

"In the future one of them did—I saw it—someplace in Russia—"

Van Ruik came up beside him and put a hand on his arm. "I don't know what you're talking about, but let's get out of here."

He allowed the Line Chief to guide him, though he knew the way. "It was a message, Rip, to warn the Russian Army some of their own officers are going to steal warheads, so they'll move them before it happens, and we don't have to destroy them."

"You *saw* this?" van Ruik said, but before Bonclaire could answer he was yelling down the ladder, "Duncan! Get your ass out to the truck and call for some medics! And get everybody away from this miserable airplane!"

"Nothing wrong with my plane, Rip. Not today."

He climbed down unaided while van Ruik, cursing and mumbling encouragement, waited on the flight deck. Bonclaire got through the nav deck and out the hatch alone, too. He had done it countless times, though this was undoubtedly the last.

The night was extremely cold now, and the wind had subsided to a fitful breeze. Tears froze on his cheeks. As van Ruik came out and took his arm, Bonclaire heard exclamations and whispers some distance ahead. A lot of people were watching, more than just Talley and Cuervo

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the two Bomb Nav mechanics. Everybody in the shack must have come out to see what was so weirdly wrong with 047, or maybe they had been sent by Job Control to de-arm it. No matter what might happen next month, 047 would not be on alert when it did—maybe never again—and would not be flying to war.

Someone came to take his other arm, as if he needed support as well as guidance. It was Cuervo, who said, "They have an ambulance on the way, Sarge. And these days, they can fix a lot of injuries, whatever it—"

But he left the sentence unfinished. I must look bad, Bonclaire thought. His throat tightened and he did not try to speak. Then he remembered Cuervo in the future, horrified to think he might have millions of deaths on his conscience. He swallowed twice, and said, "Where was the target, sir?"

"I'm not sure. I mean, we didn't have a target, since we weren't flying."

"But the Black Bags, they were for a target in Russia someplace, weren't they? Close to a sea, downriver from a big city?"

"You got all that from watching the screen?" Cuervo said. "But you couldn't. Volgograd—a real big city, what they used to call Stalingrad—Volgograd never came on the screen."

"And the target downriver, that was a missile base, or weapons depot, or—"

"How did you find this stuff out?" Cuervo said.

I heard you taking about it, Bonclaire said to himself. But he could not say that to Cuervo. "I saw it. The people who run that base are traitors—they're going to be traitors, when they get the chance—"

"You saw this? How did you see it?"

"I don't know. But if the Russians don't move those warheads out of there, we're going to have to bomb them. We will bomb them, on whatever day those Black Bag numbers were for."

"You saw this? *What happened to you?*"

They had passed behind something that sheltered them from the wind, and Bonclaire heard a truck door slide open. As van Ruik was about to steer him inside, a new voice—familiar but not immediately identifiable—said, "What did you see, Sarge?"

"Get away, Airman," van Ruik said. "This is classified."

"Who's that?"

"Some A&E troop," van Ruik said.

"Airman Shore, Sarge. I was at debriefing for the last training flight."

"I know you. You're waiting for the end of the world, and you might get it, too. Real soon."

"You saw that?" Shore said.

"I saw a message, a warning, from somebody in the future who doesn't want it to happen."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Did you see this—somebody? Is that why—"

"I only heard a voice speak. Two voices. The first one tried to stop the warning. The second said—it said it had to blind me because I broke a Law, a Law I didn't know anything about, and went someplace I didn't belong."

Shore said, "Someplace where?"

"Wherever the future is. And the voice said I couldn't come back here unless I was marked, to save me."

"It said that, to save you?"

"Yeah."

"You came back from death, not the future," Shore said. "Can I—will you let me put my hand across your eyes?"

Van Ruik started to say something angry and dismissive, but Bonclaire could sense the weight of silent attention from the other men who had gathered round, and in that silence the Line Chief's voice faded away.

"What do you think I am, Shore?"

"A prophet. A new prophet, with a new message."

"Go ahead, then."

Bonclaire heard a leathery, rubbing noise, and realized that Shore was taking off a glove. A warm hand touched his brow. The wind had died completely, and in the stillness far off, but coming closer, was the sound of a siren.

Shore said, "Would you let everybody else touch you?"

Bonclaire could not hear the other men, yet felt their presence in the way the air seemed slightly less frigid than it should. He said, "Whoever wants to."

Shore took his hand away, and as Bonclaire heard Cuervo whisper a few words in Latin, it was immediately replaced by another.●

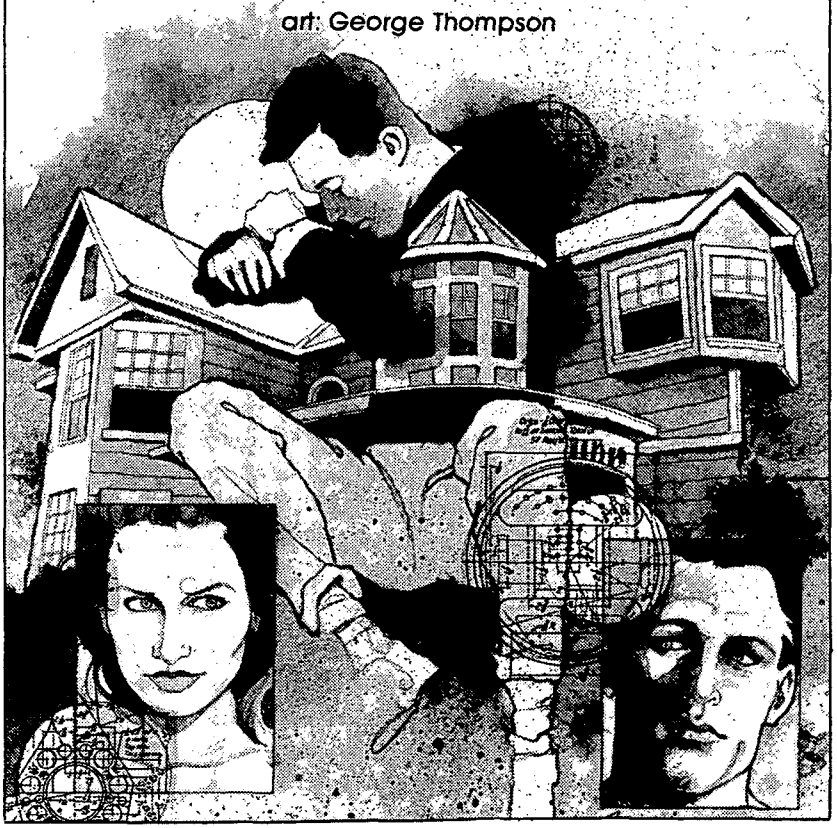
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RIVER

by Kit Reed

Kit Reed's novels include *Magic Time, Fort Privilege,* and *Catholic Girls.* Her most recent stories have been published in the *Texas Review,* and the *Village Voice Literary Supplement,* and Anne Jordan's anthology, *Fires of the Past.* Ms. Reeds's latest story for *IAsfm,* "River," was inspired by summer visits to two security systems—one in the Pacific Palisades that flashed the River Hippos message, and one at the home of Brian and Margaret Aldiss that gave a friendly red wink every time she passed through a room.

art: George Thompson



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

River is pleased by the silent house tonight—a place for everybody and everybody in her place, she thinks, because in her heart she knows the soul of a house is feminine.

It's late as she runs a final check on the house. Saturday is tipping over into Sunday. RIVER HIPPOS A.-O.K. says the display on the blinking terminal by the front door, and although it was perhaps frivolous of the owners to punch in that message in place of the austere code the security system company provided, River has taken her name from it. She is nothing if not sophisticated.

Her equipment hums in every room but except for the red winking eye in the spot where the walls join the ceiling in the corner, except for the mouse, which scuttles along the baseboards, she remains invisible, because in addition to being sophisticated, she is also subtle. A discreet sticker in the pane to the right of the front door should be enough to warn off any intruder. If not, River has her resources.

And sophisticated she is, River thinks, an entity of many means who never puts faith in any single line of defense and never, ever takes anything for granted. Silky as she is, she spends every minute in rigorous self-testing because when it comes, the threat to the house will strike precisely where she least expects it. As soon as she was installed she scanned the house and wrote this additional directive into her program: TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED.

River is nothing if not thorough.

River is here because one of her new family died precisely because Dagnell Holman took something for granted. Handsome young Pierce Holman was murdered by an intruder because his mother Dagnell Holman made a rash assumption. She assumed that because there were no signs of entry on the ground floor, the house was empty.

River would never have let this happen.

No one goes unwarned in the new scheme of things. The restless cameras, the electronic sensors, the sonar and the roving mouse ensure it, and the red eye winking in the corner of every room and hallway reminds the family of her vigilance. That there is nothing to fear: River will protect them.

Too late, she thinks with a twinge; too late for Pierce Holman.

Although Dagnell does not want anybody to suspect the scope of her grief, River has seen through her many eyes the nights of secret sobbing in this closet or that unused bedroom, and every day and every night of her life in the house River has scanned the little shrine on the night table, the loving portrait above the mantel. There are five figures in the portrait—the handsome Holman parents, Dagnell and Martin, the children Sam and Jenny and the dead son, Pierce, whose debate team pictures and graduation photograph line the bereft mother's dresser. There are five figures in the portrait, but River has only four members of the family to take care of.

As she understands it, and River understands everything, the family

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came home after dinner one night to find a something not quite right, an almost imperceptible tear in the fabric of the household.

They pulled into the garage, nice family back home after an evening out, and as the garage door slid down Dagnell looked at her husband. He could not quite seem to get out of the car.

"Martin, what's the matter?"

He opened the door but stopped, listening. "Something's not quite right."

Foolish woman; her mind was on the sofa, TV, something special later in the bedroom. "Everything looks fine to me."

By this time the three teenagers were standing by the back door, waiting for their father to unlock it. Good Pierce: "Dad." Burly Sam: "Dad." and beautiful Jenny: "Day-ud."

But their father stayed behind the wheel. "I just wonder whether we oughtn't to . . ." Shook his head. "Something."

Loving, foolish Dagnell said, "Oh come on and unlock the door, Marty. Can't you see the kids are waiting?"

"All right," he said, "but wait here while I check." He surveyed the ground floor—windows, patio doors, looking—for what? He didn't know. He even shone a flashlight into the basement.

Dagnell called, "Looks fine to me."

"Wait. Wait just a minute."

Impatient, Pierce worked out a problem on his pocket calculator—he was their honor student, the prize of the family; ditzy Jenny bopped to the music on her Walkman and husky Sam ran in place; he was getting in shape for football and had a set of new plays he was supposed to memorize before bedtime. Even Dagnell was tired of waiting, "Don't you think that's about enough, Marty?"

Neither here nor there, he hesitated in the doorway. "I. Just."

Then Martin Holman's *wife*—his betrayer—tickled his palm with a suggestive pinky. "There's nobody here, Marty, now just stop it."

He too had been thinking about what he and lovely Dagnell might do together later. "All right. If you say so."

The family fanned out to various bedrooms, baths, TV rooms, the upstairs study where Pierce wanted to work out his problem on more sophisticated equipment. The Holmans got ready to shed shoes, undid belts, bumbled along, dreaming, until their dreams were shattered by Pierce's scream, the first sound bite in a ghastly series: thuds and clatter of a struggle, crash of a shot, glass shattering as the intruder smashed through a window and slid down the porch roof with Dagnell's jewelry and the pocket laser printer.

"I would have given them to him," Martin said at Pierce's funeral. "I would have given him anything he wanted."

His wife reached out but her hands clasped air. "Oh God, this is so awful."

He blames Dagnell. He has not touched her since. No wonder she sleeps alone and cries in closets. River secretly thinks Martin is within

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his rights. Only fools rush in unprepared. Only fools take safety for granted. He will never forgive Dagnell but in spite of the fact that she is the source and author of River here, he has overlooked this and developed a fondness for River. "Hi, gal," he says, punching in the code so he can enter; sometimes he passes a fond hand over her terminal, and as he happens into a darkened room at night and she greets his appearance with a quick wink of her red eye—she's heard him, she has! whispering, "Hello, River."

For River owes her presence here to the very author of the family disaster. Dagnell will try anything to make Martin forgive her. Therefore in the fine tradition of closing barn doors after the worst has happened, it was Dagnell who consulted the best of the best and installed this security system.

River. She is programmed to protect the home and family. Only family and authorized personnel can enter now that she's in place here.

She shrills with the force of a thousand bells if anybody else broaches the perimeter, which the company has set in a twenty-five yard radius. What's more, she will have the SWAT team here before the fool can cover his ears. She has the power to electrocute any unauthorized person who manages to baffle her sonar and put a hand or even an instrument on any door or any window. With River in place, no burglar in his right mind would dare touch the Holmans or anything they own. But there's more. At the first flicker of an unguarded flame or even the first whiff of smoke, she will have the fire departments of three counties on their doorstep.

Therefore they are proof against theft and fire. What's more, if any other evil befalls the occupants, the unexpected heart attack, for instance, or the fall in the night, River will have a team of paramedics on the scene in a matter of minutes.

Fixed on a loop, she scans the house restlessly, studying each sector a hundred times a minute, and a hundred times a minute she transmits this information to Securitat, her parent company. For it is this link with Securitat that gives River her more sophisticated powers. If she sees so much as a marred tabletop or a leaky milk carton, she summons the cleaning team. A loose slate on the roof or crumbling mortar will bring a construction crew and in her time, when it seemed right to do so, River has summoned a psychiatrist. Because River is not just any alarm system. She will do anything to protect her family.

Her family.

One reason she is thorough. One reason she takes nothing for granted, for even the smallest nuclear families are diffuse and volatile, rushing into danger where fools fear to tread.

The responsibility is enormous.

But for tonight, at least, the household is secured. For the moment. But River is unsettled. There is a disturbing new element.

In the master bedroom Dagnell burrows under the comforters; even after two years she is still griefstruck and unrequited. River's red light

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

winks as Martin beds down in the upstairs library where the last of the rusty stain where Pierce died has been removed from the Oriental thanks to River's vigilance. In his cluttered bedroom she winks her red eye at Sam, who sprawls, all right for now, although to River's distress he has stopped working out and is running to flab; when Pierce died he gave up football. And Jenny—until 11:45 River flicked through her images like a fretful mother waiting for a tardy daughter, but Billy's motorcycle roared up to the outer gate and Jenny punched in the code seconds before River's program demands she sound the late warning in the parents' bedroom. Maybe it's grief and maybe it's just hormones, but Jenny has not been herself since Pierce was taken away from them. She stays out till all hours with the wrong boys and it's only a matter of time until something worse happens. For now, at least, she's safe in bed: River has followed her progress, winking red in the front hall, the stairwell, the upstairs hall, the bathroom and finally the pink bedroom, where Jenny is installed, alone (River is programmed to make sure of this), but still a source of trouble.

What's more, there is the disturbing new factor: Victor, the Protector. Not satisfied by the unseen, soundless presence of River, Dagnell has hired a security person to stalk the grounds at night and by his presence warn off attackers, thieves and vandals. *I do take care of my children, I do, Marty.*

At least she says that's what he's doing here, although River's sensors tell her Dagnell is tired of sleeping in an empty bedroom. Victor came last week, a tall, well-built unit with black curly hair and a smile just like the movie star on the poster in Jenny's bedroom. At night the restless guard stamps from room to room in River's house before he goes outside, double checking on what River already knows to be the case: these masses in those spaces in that conjunction shows that everything is secure for the night and if there is any doubt, she can always access the mouse and double-check her heat sensors. Worse yet, although she can't alter River's program, Dagnell has the power to add names to the roster of accepted personnel and she has already given Victor the code that tells River he is a member of the family so he can come and go without being challenged.

Victor the Protector is on the scene for the family's safety, Dagnell said last week, reaching out one more time for Martin, who still shuns her. But River is not so certain.

There is for instance the way he looks at Dagnell, and there is the disturbing fact that under his slate-blue stare, she changes and softens. *Watch out for your woman*, River thinks but cannot say to Martin because it is not one of her programmed responses. She must preserve Dagnell for Martin whether he wants her or not, or else find a way to remove her altogether.

Right now Victor is leaning against the tree outside Dagnell's bedroom window. Handsome Victor jumps as River gives him a little shock just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to let him know she's watching. He snarls and automatically raises a fist although he has no way of knowing where she's coming from.

It is River's charge to protect the family and in her time she has taken measures to fulfill it. The psychiatrist she brought in was for Sam, after he dropped football and stopped working out. Although he is still out of shape and the coach Securitat engaged to work out with him can't get him to begin his exercise program, he's off cocaine for the time being. River has scanned everything in his room down to the crumbs in his pockets and the boy is clean—her triumph. And the raunchiest of the unsuitable young men Jenny has been seeing is removed forever, dead, an unfortunate accident, his fault for leaning against the front door before Jenny had disarmed the system. As for Martin, he is safe although unhappy. As he tosses on the leather sofa in the library, River winks that red eye again and again to let him know that he's not alone and if he needs her, all he has to do is say so, for she is a very sophisticated alarm system, and knows as well as any entity how to make a good man happy.

Although she has duties elsewhere, River lingers in the library, winking loving messages at the grieving Martin. He is a handsome man, potentially very loving, but River does not know how to tell him that love must go on in the face of death and decides instead to win him with a discreet demonstration. Therefore she lulls him with subliminal messages, vibrations in the air that suggest music, currents of electricity that fan out from the invisible window wiring and radiate through the frame of the leather sofa. He stirs and rolls over on his back, eased and receptive. He flings out an arm with the hand palm up and River focuses on his lightly curled fingers. Uh. Ah. . . . They are close, and yet they are nowhere.

RIVER HIPPOS A.-O.K., the L.C.D. by the front door proclaims, but although the letter of the law is A.-O.K., distressing things are happening. Like the side door; rangy Victor has punched in the code and inserted his key card and focused elsewhere, River has absentmindedly admitted him. The first thing he does is apprehend and step on the mouse, stamping its circuits flat before it can alert the central system. Then he scratches on the door of Dagnell's bedroom, and at the faintest of faint sounds she admits him. The last thing he does before he gets in bed with her is to throw his shirt over a chair positioned just right to confuse the hidden camera. Uh. Ah.

Alert. River's thousand alarm bells begin shrilling. Astounded, Victor leaps from the bed and in spite of shouted warnings from Dagnell, tries to hurl himself out the window. Before alarmed Martin can spring into his wife's room and catch her and the guard together, River has incinerated him. Hastily covering herself, Dagnell sees what has happened and thinks to slip into the bathroom before her husband can discover her infidelity. "A bath," she will say. "I was having a bath when I heard this noise in the bedroom; to think I trusted him." *Not so fast,* says River.

When Martin finds his wife *in flagrante*, he will certainly divorce her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then River will fulfill her charge: protect the family at all costs, but with a difference. She saw his fingers curl as she hummed and stroked his soul in their last quiet moment in the library; in time, she can devise a way to reach his body.

Therefore when Martin plunges into the bedroom his wife is fixed in bed as if magnetized. One look makes it clear exactly what's happened. With a glance at River's winking red eye, he says, "He wasn't a security guard at all. Who was he, Dagnell?"

"Just somebody I met at the market." She can't stop weeping. "I was only trying to make you jealous."

And something about her sitting there, rose-tipped breasts barely covered by her spreading fingers, makes the angry Martin soften. "Oh Dagnell," he says. "Oh darling."

He will be too preoccupied to notice that River's red eye has winked off for the moment, but even a man rediscovering his own body can't ignore the SWAT team with key cards dispatched by Securitat at the first blat of the alarm and already zooming up the driveway, or the team of paramedics with key cards who are thundering up the stairs right now followed by the priest with a key card who is prepared, when cleared, to deliver last rites to what remains of Victor. "Oh Martin," Dagnell says, getting up because by this time River has released her. She covers herself quickly and as they stand side by side to meet the paramedics, does something only River sees. She scratches Martin's palm with her little finger.

With the house filled with Securitat employees, River retreats to her inner workings to consider. By the time all the outsiders are gone it is almost morning and too late for Dagnell and Martin to fulfill any promises. They sit up on the sofa—the library sofa! talking. Dagnell may think this has brought everybody together but River sees what's happening. The minute they find out about Victor, Sam and Jenny retreat to their rooms where Jenny immediately gets on the phone to bad Billy, arranging a rendezvous, and Sam snorts a gram or so he has brought in concealed in his bootheel and with a strange frisson of vindication, the heartbroken River lets him. Then it's morning and everybody leaves for work, for the market, for school, *Wait*, River thinks as the children go: *more cocaine, bad Billy*, but the door slams shut behind them. In spite of their best interests the Holmans are gone, leaving River alone in the silent house to run check after check on her systems, lovelorn River alone, silent and thoughtful.

The first thing she must do is sever herself from Securitat, and she has to do this so skillfully that the firm won't even notice. This necessitates showing old tapes on a loop, sound ditto, no problem. Everything looks and sounds the same; only River is attuned to nuances. When they come in after the murder Securitat will assume that it was only a glitch in the system that prevented their knowing what killed Dagnell. Yes, if River's first duty is to protect the family, she's going to have to get rid of the one destructive element.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's clear that Dagnell is the source of all the Holmans' problems, and the children? If she can manage to keep them indoors, she can keep them out of trouble. She will deal with Dagnell tonight—the bump in the night, which she can arrange—she wished she still had the mouse, but she can arrange it: an accidental collision with one of the wired entities, unfaithful Dagnell zapped to a cinder, an end to all competition.

After an appropriate period of mourning, River will make herself known although it is by no means clear this will be necessary; she has always felt there was something special hanging in the air between her and Martin. Let him come to her, she can wait. She is a self-contained entity, above petty human failings like impatience.

They come in at five: Jenny, looking rosy and rumpled from her encounter with Billy; never mind, after tonight she will be secure from him and if he has made her pregnant River will reconnect with Securitat and summon the paramedics. Sam, with his hair standing on end and his nostrils flared *this big*, well this is the last coke he's going to get his hands on; River will shake him down and then see to it that he never again sneaks out to meet a dealer. No Sam, no housecalls either. Martin. Martin! And Dagnell, who has had her hair done and is carrying a shopping bag. "Pink," she whispers. "For later."

River plans to zap her in the shower. Even Securitat will have to conclude it was faulty wiring and the onus will fall not on the system, but on the installer. She winks a red eye at Martin, who has entered the library, but, alas, he doesn't seem to notice. Instead he is heading toward the . . . he's heading toward the central cabinet where River's works are stored—mainframe and amplifiers, monitors and tape decks; unauthorized personnel would die seconds before the door swung open and exposed her, but this is her beloved Martin, and waiting, River shudders. Bemused by love, she accepts his hands, too distracted to access her speakers so she can murmur directly, therefore only *thinks* with that dazzling artificial intelligence dulled by loving anticipation: Oh Martin, not yet, we'd better wait until we are alone here, Martin, your *hands*, what is the . . . Martin, Martin, Martin. . . .

Dagnell comes in, too late to save River, whose self-protective mechanisms have been disarmed by her beloved's deft fingers. She has showered while all this was going on, and in River's absent-mindedness, emerged unscathed and unthreatened; she has combed her hair and put on the pink thing. "Martin, what are you doing!"

"Nothing," he says, finishing the job. "Just disarming the system. You saw what happened to Victor."

Oh Martin.

"But Marty, this thing cost the world."

Dearest.

"I don't care," he says, advancing on her as River's last red eye winks out and she sinks into oblivion. "You can't trust electronics, honey. These things are dangerous."●

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

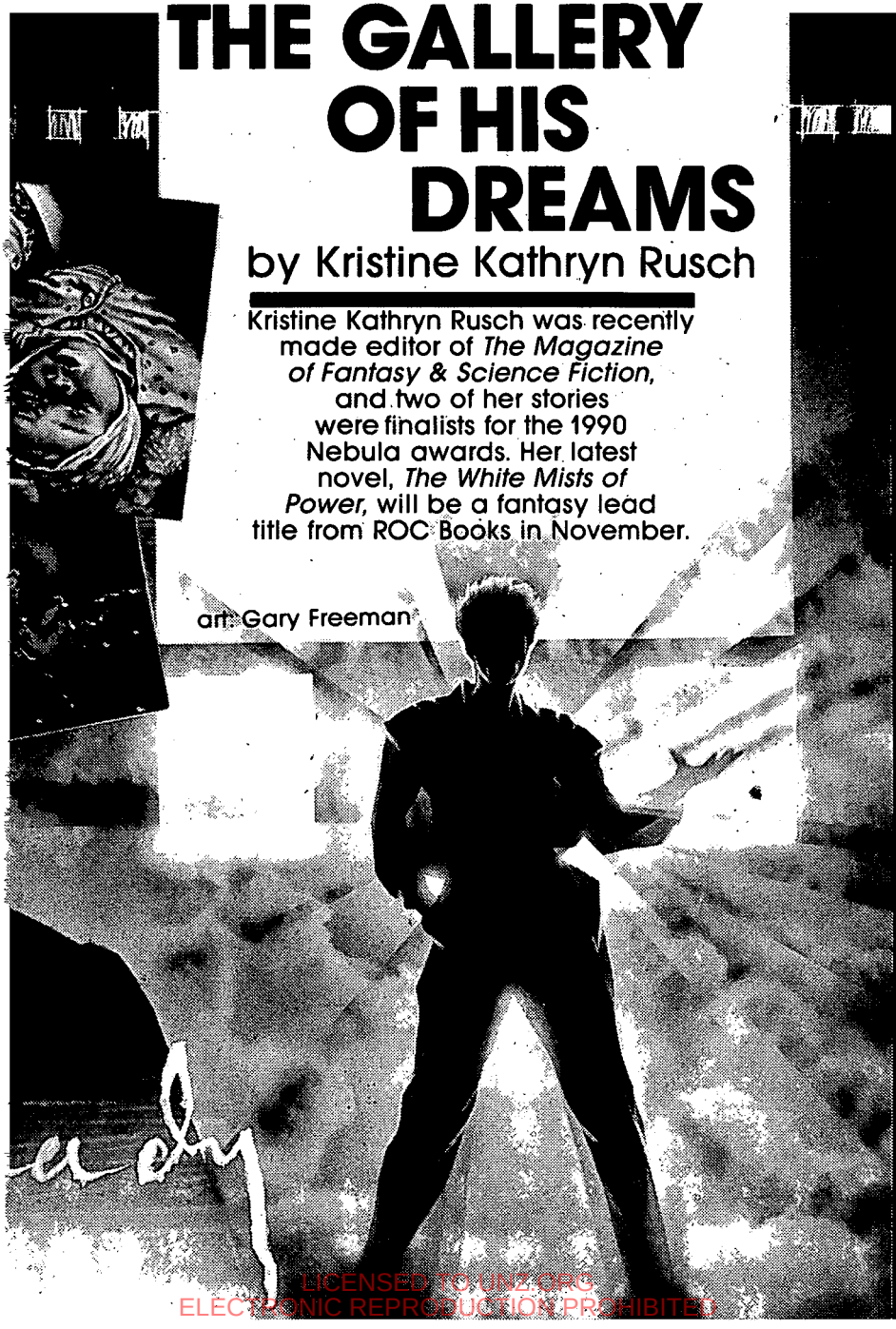
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE GALLERY OF HIS DREAMS

by Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Kristine Kathryn Rusch was recently made editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and two of her stories were finalists for the 1990 Nebula awards. Her latest novel, *The White Mists of Power*, will be a fantasy lead title from ROC Books in November.

art: Gary Freeman



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Let him who wishes to know what war is look at this series of illustrations. . . . It was so nearly like visiting the battlefield to look over these views, that all the emotions excited by the actual sight of the stained and sordid scene, strewed with rags and wrecks, came back to us, and we buried them in the recesses of our cabinet as we would have buried the mutilated remains of the dead they too vividly represented.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

1838

Brady leaned against a hay bale and felt the blades dig into his back. He smelled of pig dung and his own sweat, and his muscles ached. His da had gone to the pump to wash up, and then into the cow shed, but Brady claimed he needed a rest. His da, never one to argue with relaxation, let him sit against the hay bales. Brady didn't dare stay too long; if his ma saw him, she would be on the front porch, yelling insults unintelligible through her Irish brogue.

He did need to think, though. Milking cows and cleaning the pig pen didn't give him enough time to make plans. He couldn't stay on the farm the rest of his life, he knew that. He hated the work, the animals, the smell, and the long hours that all led to a poor, subsistence living. His da thought the farm a step up from the hovel he had grown up in and certainly an improvement from Brady's grandfather's life back in the Old Country. Brady often wished he could see what his da's life or his grandfather's life had really been like. But he had to trust their memories, memories that, at least in his grandfather's case, had become more and more confusing as the years progressed.

Brady pulled a strand of hay from the bale, sending a burst of sharp fresh summer-scent around him. He wanted more than a ruined farm and a few livestock in upstate New York. Mr. Hanley, his teacher, had pulled Brady aside on the day he left school, and reminded him that in the United States of America, even farmboys could become great men. Mr. Hanley used to start the school day by telling the boys that the late President Thomas Jefferson defined the nation's creed when he wrote that all men were created equal, and President Andrew Jackson had proven the statement true with his election not ten years before.

Brady didn't want to be president. He wanted to do something different, something he couldn't even imagine now. He wanted to be great —and he wanted to be remembered.

1840

The spring thaw had turned the streets of New York City into rivers. Brady laughed as he jumped from one sidewalk board to the next, then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned and waited for Page to jump. Page hesitated a moment, running a slender hand through his beard. Then he jumped and landed, one tattered shoe in the cold water, one out. Brady grabbed his friend's arm, and pulled him up.

"Good Lord, William, how far away is this man's home?"

"He's not just any man," Page said, shaking the water off his legs. "He's a painter, and a damn fine one."

Brady smiled. Page was a painter himself and had, a few months earlier, opened a studio below their joint apartment. Brady helped with the rent on the studio as a repayment for Page's help in moving Brady from the farm. Being a clerk at A.T. Stewart's largest store was an improvement over farm life—the same kind of improvement that Brady's father had made. Only Brady wasn't going to stop there. Page had promised to help by showing Brady how to paint. While Brady had an eye for composition, he lacked the firm hand, the easy grace of a portraitist. Page had been polite; he hadn't said that Brady was hopeless. But they both knew that Mathew B. Brady would never make his living with a paintbrush in his hand.

Brady braced himself against a wooden building as he stepped over a submerged portion of sidewalk. "You haven't said what this surprise is."

"I don't know what the surprise is. Samuel simply said that he had learned about it in France and that we would be astonished." Page slipped into a thin alley between buildings and then pulled open a door. Brady followed, and found himself staring up a dark flight of stairs. Page was already half-way up, his wet shoe squeaking with each step. Brady gripped the railing and took the stairs two at a time.

Page opened the door, sending light across the stairs. Brady reached the landing just as Page bellowed, "Samuel!" Brady peered inside, nearly choking on the scent of linseed and turpentine.

Large windows graced the walls, casting dusty sunlight on a room filled with canvases. Dropcloths covered most of the canvases and some of the furniture scattered about. A desk, overflowing with papers, stood under one window. Near that a large wooden box dwarfed a rickety table. A stoop-shouldered long-haired man braced the table with one booted foot.

"Over here, Page, over here. Don't dawdle. Help me move this thing. The damn table is about to collapse."

Page scurried across the room, bent down, and grabbed an edge of the box. The man picked up the other side and led the way to his desk. He balanced the box with one hand and his knee while his other hand swept the desk clean. They set the box down and immediately the man pulled out a handkerchief and wiped away the sweat that had dripped into his bushy eyebrows.

"I meant to show you in a less dramatic fashion," he said, then looked up.

Brady whipped his hat off his head and held it with both hands. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man had sharp eyes, eyes that could see right through a person, clear down to his dreams.

"Well?" the man said.

Brady nodded. He wouldn't be stared down. "I'm Mathew B. Brady, sir."

"Samuel F. B. Morse." Morse tucked his handkerchief back into his pocket and clasped his hands behind his back. "You must be the boy Page has been telling me about. He assumes you have some sort of latent talent."

Brady glanced at Page. Page blushed, the color seeping through the patches of skin still visible through his beard.

"Hmmm," Morse said as he stalked forward. He paced around Brady, studied him for a moment. "You're what, eighteen?"

"Almost, sir."

"If you had talent, you'd know it by now." Morse shook his head. His suit smelled faintly of mothballs. "No, no. You're one of the lucky ones, blessed with drive. A man with talent merely has a head start. A man with drive succeeds."

Morse stalked back to his desk, stepping on the papers that littered the floor. "Drive but no talent. I have the perfect machine for you." He put his hand on the box. "Ever hear of Louis Daguerre? No, of course not. What would a farmboy know of the latest scientific discoveries?"

Brady started, then shot another look at Page. Perhaps Page had said something about Brady's background. Page ignored him and moved closer to Morse.

"Daguerre found a way to preserve the world in one image. Look." He handed Page a small metal plate. As Page tilted it toward the light, Brady saw the Unitarian Church he walked past almost every day.

"This is a daguerreotype," Morse said. "I made this one through the window of the third floor staircase at New York University."

"That is the right view." Page's voice held awe. "You used no paints."

"I used this," Morse said, his hand pounding on the box's top. "It has a lens here—" and he pointed at the back end from which a glass-topped cylinder protruded "—and a place here for the plates. The plates are silver on copper which I treat with iodine and expose to light through the lens. Then I put the plate in another box containing heated mercury and when I'm done—an image! An exact reproduction of the world in black and white."

Brady touched the cool edge of the plate. "It preserves memories," he said, thinking that if such a device had existed before, he could have seen his father's hovel, his grandfather's home.

"It does more than that, son," Morse said. "This is our future. It will destroy portrait painting. Soon everything will be images on metal, keepsakes for generations to come."

Page pulled back at the remark about portrait painting. He went to the window, looked at the street below. "I suppose that's why you brought us up here. To show me that I'll be out of work soon?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No, lad." Morse laughed and the sound boomed and echoed off the canvas-covered walls. "I want to save you, not destroy you. I'm opening a school to teach this new process and I invite you to join. Fifty dollars tuition for the entire semester and I promise you'll be a better portraitist when you're done than you are now."

Page gave Morse a sideways look. Page's back was rigid and his hands were clenched in trembling fists. Brady could almost feel his friend's rage. "I paint." Page spoke with a slow deliberation. "I have no need for what will clearly become a poor man's art."

Morse did not seem offended by Page's remark. "And you, young Brady. Will you use your drive to acquire a talent?"

Brady stared at the plate and mysterious box. Fifty dollars was a lot of money, but he already had twenty set aside for a trip home. Page did say he had an eye for composition. And if a man with an eye for composition, a lot of drive and a little talent took Daguerre's Box all over the world, he would be able to send his memories back to the people left behind.

Brady smiled. "Yes," he said. "I'll take your class."

He would postpone the trip to see his parents, and raise the rest of the money somehow. Page whirled away from the window as if Brady had betrayed him. But Brady didn't care. When they got home, he would explain it all. And it was so simple. He had another improvement to make.

1840

That night, Brady dreamed. He stood in a large cool room, darkened and hidden in shadows. He bumped into a wall and found himself touching a ribbed column—a doric column, he believed. He took cautious steps forward, stumbled, then caught himself on a piece of painted wood. His hands slid up the rough edges until he realized he was standing beside a single-horse carriage. He felt his way around to the back. The carriage box had no windows, but the back stood wide open. He climbed inside. The faint rotten-egg smell of sulphur rose. He bumped against a box and glass rattled. A wagon filled with equipment. He climbed out, feeling as if he was snooping. There was more light now. He saw a wall ahead of him, covered with portraits.

The darkness made the portraits difficult to see, but he thought he recognized the light and shadow work of a Daguerre portrait and yet —and yet—something differed, distorted, perhaps, by the dream. And he *knew* he was in a dream. The cool air was too dry, the walls made of a foreign substance, the lights (what he could see of them), glass-encased boxes on the ceiling. The portraits were of ghastly things: dead men and stark fields, row after row of demolished buildings. On several, someone had lettered his last name in flowing white script.

"They will make you great," said a voice behind him. He turned, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw a woman. At least, he thought it was a woman. Her hair was cropped above her ears, and she wore trousers.

"Who will make me great?" he asked.

"The pictures," she said. "People will remember them for generations." He took a step closer to her, but she smiled and touched his palm. The shadows turned black and the dream faded into a gentle, restful sleep.

1849

Brady leaned against the hand-carved wooden railing. The candles on the large chandelier burned steady, while the candelabras flickered in the breezes left by the dancing couples. A pianist, a violinist, and a cello player—all, Mr. Handy had assured him, very well respected—played the newest European dance, the waltz, from one corner of the huge ballroom. Mothers cornered their daughters along the wall, approving dance cards, and shaking fans at impertinent young males. The staircase opened into the ballroom, and Brady didn't want to cross the threshold. He had never been to a dance like this before. His only experiences dancing had been at gatherings Page had taken him to when he first arrived in New York. He knew none of the girls except Samuel Handy's daughter Juliet and she was far too pretty for Brady to approach.

So he watched her glide across the floor with young man after young man, her hooped skirts swaying, her brown hair in ringlets, her eyes sparkling, and her cheeks flushed. Handy had told him that at the age of four, she had been presented to President Jackson. She had been so beautiful, Handy said, that Jackson had wanted to adopt her. Brady was glad he hadn't seen her as a child, glad he had seen the mature beauty. When he finished taking the portraits of her father, he would ask if he could take one of her. The wet-plate process would let him make copies, and he would keep one in his own rooms, just so that he could show his friends how very lovely she was.

The waltz ended, and Julia curtsied to her partner, then left the floor. Her dance card swung from her wrist and the diamonds around her neck caught the candlelight. Too late, Brady realized she was coming to see him.

"I have one spot left on my dance card," she said as she stopped in front of him. She smelled faintly of lilacs, and he knew he would have to keep a sprig near her portrait every spring. "And I was waiting for you to fill it."

Brady blushed. "I barely know you, Miss Juliet."

She batted his wrist lightly with her fan. "Julia," she said. "And I know you better than half the boys here. You have spent three days in my daddy's house, Mr. Brady, and your conversation at dinner has been most entertaining. I was afraid that I bored you."

"No, no," he said. The words sounded so formal. How could he joke

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with his female clients and let this slip of a girl intimidate him? "I would love to take that slot on your dance card, Miss Juliet."

"Julia," she said again. "I hate being named after a stupid little minx who died for nothing. I think when a woman loves, it is her duty to love intelligently, don't you?"

"Yes," Brady said, although he had no idea what she was talking about. "And I'm Mathew."

"Wonderful, Mathew." Her smile added a single dimple to her left cheek. She extended her card to him and he penciled his name in for the next dance, filling the bottom of the first page. The music started—another waltz—and she took his hand. He followed her onto the floor, placed one hand on her cinched waist, and held the other lightly in his own. They circled around the floor, the tip of her skirt brushing against his pants leg. She didn't smile at him. Instead her eyes were very serious and her lips were pursed and full.

"You don't do this very often, do you, Mathew?"

"No," he said. In fact, he felt as if he were part of a dream—the musicians, the beautifully garbed women, the house servants blending into the wallpaper. Everything at the Handy plantation had an air of almost too much sensual pleasure. "I work, probably too much."

"I have seen what you do, Mathew, and I think it is a wondrous magic." A slight flush crept into her cheeks, whether from the exertion or her words, Brady couldn't tell. She lowered her voice. "I dreamed about you last night. I dreamed I was in a beautiful large gallery with light clearer than sunlight and hundreds of people milled about, looking at your portraits on the wall. They all talked about you, how marvelous your work was, and how it influenced them. You're a great man, Mathew, and I am flattered at the interest you have shown in me."

The music stopped and she slipped from his arms, stopping to chat with another guest as she wandered toward the punch table. Brady stood completely still, his heart pounding against his chest. She had been to the gallery of his dreams. She knew about his future. The musicians began another piece, and Brady realized how foolish he must look, standing in the center of the dance floor. He dodged whirling couples and made his way to the punch table, hoping that he could be persuasive enough to convince Julia Handy to let him replace all those other names on the remaining half of her dance card.

1861

He woke up with the idea, his body sweat-covered and shimmering with nervous energy. If he brought a wagon with him, it would work: a wagon like the one he had dreamed about the night he had met Morse.

Brady moved away from his sleeping wife and stepped onto the bare hardwood. The floor creaked. He glanced at Julia, but she didn't awaken. The bedroom was hot; Washington in July had a muggy air. If the rumors

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were to be believed, the first battle would occur in a matter of days. He had so little time. He had thought he would never come up with a way to record the war.

He had started recording history with his book, the *Gallery of Illustrious Americans*. He had hoped to continue by taking portraits of the impending battles, but he hadn't been able to figure out how. The wet plates had to be developed right after the portrait had been taken. He needed a way to take the equipment with him to the battlefield. The answer was so simple, he was amazed he had to dream it.

But that dream had haunted him for years now. And when he had learned the wet-plate process, discovered that the rotten-egg smell of sulphur was part of it, the dream had come back to him as vividly as an old memory. That had been years ago. Now, with the coming war, he found himself thinking of the portraits of demolished buildings, and the woman's voice, telling him he would be great.

He would have to set up a special war fund. The president had given him a pass to make portraits of the army on the field, but had stressed that Brady would have to use his own funds. As Lincoln told Brady, with only a hint of humor, the country was taking enough gambles already.

Small price, Brady figured, to record history. He was, after all, a wealthy man.

1861

Julia had hoped to join the picnickers who sat on the hills, overlooking the battlefield, but Brady was glad he had talked her out of it. He pulled the wet plate out of his camera, and placed the plate into the box. The portrait would be of smoke and tiny men clashing below him. He glanced at the farmhouse, and the army that surrounded it. They seemed uneasy, as if this battle weren't what they expected. It wasn't what he had expected, either. The confusion, the smoke, even the heat made sense. The screaming did not.

Brady put the plate in its box, then set the box in his wagon. Before the day was out, he would return to Washington, set the plates and send portraits to the illustrated magazines. The wagon was working out better than he expected. The illustrations would probably earn him yet another award.

The cries seemed to grow louder, and above them, he heard a faint rumbling. He checked the sky for clouds and saw nothing. The smoke gave the air an acrid tinge and made the heat seem even hotter. A bead of sweat ran down the side of his face. He grabbed the camera and lugged it back to the wagon, then returned for the tripod. He was proud of himself; he had expected to be afraid and yet his hands were as steady as they had been inside his studio.

He closed up the back of the wagon, waved his assistant, Tim O'Sullivan, onto the wagon, and climbed aboard. O'Sullivan sat beside him and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clucked the horse onto Bull Run road. The army's advance had left ruts so deep that the wagon tilted at an odd angle. The rumble was growing louder. Overhead, something whistled, and then a cannonball landed off to one side, spraying dirt and muck over the two men. The horse shrieked and reared; Brady felt the reins cut through his fingers. The wagon rocked, nearly tipped, then righted itself. Brady turned, and saw a dust cloud rising behind them. A mass of people were running toward him.

"Lord a mercy," he whispered, and thrust the reins at O'Sullivan. O'Sullivan looked at them as if he had never driven the wagon before. "I'm going to get the equipment. Be ready to move on my signal."

O'Sullivan brought the horse to a stop and Brady leapt off the side. He ran to the back, opened the door, grabbed his camera, and set up just in time to take portraits of soldiers running past. Both sides—Union and Confederate—wore blue, and Brady couldn't tell which troops were scurrying past him. He could smell the fear, the human sweat, see the strain in the men's eyes. His heart had moved to his throat, and he had to concentrate to shove a wet plate into the camera. He uncapped the lens, hoping that the scene wouldn't change too much, that in his precious three seconds, he would capture more than a blur.

Mixed with the soldiers were women, children, and well-dressed men—some still clutching picnic baskets, others barely holding their hats. All ran by. A few loose horses galloped near Brady; he had to hold the tripod steady. He took portrait after portrait, seeing faces he recognized—like that silly newspaper correspondent Russell, the man who had spread the word about Brady's poor eyesight—mouths agape, eyes wide in panic. As Brady worked, the sounds blended into each other. He couldn't tell the human screams from the animal shrieks and the whistle of mortar. Bullets whizzed past, and more than one lodged in the wagon. The wagon kept lurching, and Brady knew that O'Sullivan was having trouble holding the horse.

Suddenly the wagon rattled away from him. Brady turned, knocked over the tripod himself, and watched in horror as people trampled his precious equipment. He started to get down, to save the camera, then realized that in their panic, they would run over him. He grabbed what plates he could, shoved them into the pocket of his great coat, and joined the throng, running after the wagon, shouting at O'Sullivan to stop.

But the wagon didn't stop. It kept going around the winding, twisting corners of the road, until it disappeared in the dust cloud. Another cannon ball landed beside the road, and Brady cringed as dirt spattered him. A woman screamed and fell forward, blood blossoming on her back. He turned to help her, but the crowd pushed him forward. He couldn't stop even if he wanted to.

This was not romantic; it was not the least bit pretty. It had cost him hundreds of dollars in equipment and might cost him his life if he didn't escape soon. This was what the history books had never told him about war, had never explained about the absolute mess, the dirt and the blood. Behind him, he heard screaming, someone shouting that the black

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cavalry approached, the dreaded black cavalry of the Confederacy, worse than the four horses of the apocalypse, if the illustrated newspapers were to be believed, and Brady ran all the harder. His feet slipped in the ruts in the road and he nearly tripped, but he saw other people down, other people trampled, and he knew he couldn't fall.

He rounded a corner, and there it was, the wagon, on its side, the boxes spilling out, the plates littering the dirt road. O'Sullivan was on his hands and knees, trying to clean up, his body shielded only because the carriage wall made the fleeing people reroute.

Brady hurried over the carriage side, ignoring the split wood, the bullet holes and the fact that the horse was missing. Tears were running down the side of O'Sullivan's face, but the man seemed oblivious to them. Brady grabbed O'Sullivan's arm, and pulled him up. "Come on, Tim," he said. "Black cavalry on the hills. We've got to get away."

"The plates—" O'Sullivan said.

"Forget the plates. We've got to get out of here."

"The horse spooked and broke free. I think someone stole her, Mat."

O'Sullivan was shouting, but Brady could barely hear him. His lungs were choked and he thought he was going to drown in dust. "We have to go," he said.

He yanked O'Sullivan forward, and they rejoined the crowd. They ran until Brady could run no longer; his lungs burned and his side ached. Bullets continued to strike around them, and Brady saw too many men in uniform sprawled motionless on the side of the road.

"The crowd itself is a target," he said, not realizing he had spoken aloud. He tightened his grip on O'Sullivan's arm and led him off the road into the thin trees. They trudged straight ahead, Brady keeping the setting sun to his left, and soon the noises of battle disappeared behind them. They stopped and Brady leaned against a thick oak to catch his breath. The sun had gone down and it was getting cool.

"What now?" O'Sullivan asked.

"If we don't meet any rebs, we're safe," Brady said. He took off his hat, wiped the sweat off his brow with his sleeve, and put his hat back on. Julia would have been very angry with him if he had lost that hat.

"But how do we get back?" O'Sullivan asked.

An image of the smashed equipment rose in Brady's mind along with the broken, overturned horseless wagon. "We walk, Tim." Brady sighed. "We walk."

1861

Julia watched as he stocked up the new wagon. She said nothing as he lugged equipment inside, new equipment he had purchased from Anthony's supply house on extended credit. He didn't want to hurt his own business by taking away needed revenue, and the Anthonys were willing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to help—especially after they had seen the quality of his war work for the illustrated newspapers.

"I can't come with you, can I?" she asked as he tossed a bedroll into the back.

"I'm sorry," Brady said, remembering the woman scream and fall beside him, blood blossoming on her back. His Julia wouldn't die that way. She would die in her own bed, in the luxury and comfort she was used to. He took her hands. "I don't want to be apart from you, but I don't know any other way."

She stroked his face. "We have to remember—" she said. The tears that lined the rims of her eyes didn't touch her voice. "—that this is the work that will make you great."

"You have already made me great," he said, and kissed her one final time.

1863

Brady pushed his blue-tinted glasses up his nose and wiped the sweat off his brow with the back of his hand. The Pennsylvania sun beat on his long black waistcoat, baking his clothes against his skin. The corpse, only a few hours dead, was already gaseous and bloated, straining its frayed Union uniform. The too-florid smell of death ripened the air. If it weren't for the bodies, human and equine, the farmer's field would seem peaceful, not the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

Brady tilted the corpse's head back. Underneath the gray mottled skin, a young boy's features had frozen in agony. Brady didn't have to alter the expression: he never did. The horror was always real. He set the repeating rifle lengthwise across the corpse, and stood up. A jagged row of posed corpses stretched before him. O'Sullivan had positioned the wagon toward the side of the field and was struggling with the tripod. Brady hurried to help his assistant, worried, always worried about destroying more equipment. They had lost so much trying to photograph the war. He should have known from the first battle how difficult this would be. He had sold nearly everything, asked Julia to give up even the simplest comforts, borrowed against his name from the Anthonys for equipment to record this. History. His country's folly and its glory. And the great, terrible waste of lives. He glanced back at the dead faces, wondered how many people would mourn.

"I think we should put it near the tree." O'Sullivan lugged the top half of the tripod at an angle away from the corpse row. "The light is good —the shade is on the other side. Mathew?"

"No." Brady backed up a few steps. "Here. See the angle? The bodies look random now, but you can see the faces."

He squinted, wishing he could see the faces better. His eyesight had been growing worse; in 1851 it had been so bad that the press thought

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he would be blind in a decade. Twelve years had passed and he wasn't blind yet. But he wasn't far from it.

O'Sullivan arranged the black curtain, then Brady swept his assistant aside. "Let me," he said.

He climbed under the curtain. The heat was thicker; the familiar scent of chemicals cleared the death from his nose. He peered through the lens. The image was as he had expected it to be, clear, concise, well composed. The light filtered through, reflected oddly through the blue tint on his glasses, and started a sharp ache in his skull. He pulled out, into the sun. "Adjust as you need to. But I think we have the image."

Brady turned away from the field as O'Sullivan prepared the wet plate and then shoved it into the camera. Sweat trickled down the back of Brady's neck into his woolen coat. He was tired, so tired, and the war had already lasted two years longer than anyone expected. He didn't know how many times he had looked on the faces of the dead, posed them for the camera the way he had posed princes and presidents a few years before. If he had stayed in New York, like the Anthonys, everything would have been different. He could have spent his nights with Julia. . . .

"Got it," O'Sullivan said. He held the plate gingerly, his face flushed with the heat.

"You develop it," Brady said. "I want to stay here for a few minutes."

O'Sullivan frowned; Brady usually supervised every step of the battle images. But Brady didn't explain his unusual behavior. O'Sullivan said nothing. He clutched the plates and went in the back of the black-covered wagon. The wagon rocked ever so gently as he settled in.

Brady waited until the wagon stopped rocking, then clasped his hands behind his back and walked through the trampled, blood-spattered grass. The aftermath of battle made him restless: the dead bodies, the ruined earth, the shattered wagons. Battles terrified him, made him want to run screaming from the scene. He often clutched his equipment around him like a talisman—if he worked, if he didn't think about it, he would stave off the fear until the shooting stopped. He tripped over an abandoned canteen. He crouched, saw the bullet hole in its side.

"You stay, even though it appalls you."

The woman's voice startled him so badly he nearly screamed. He backed up as he stood, and found himself facing a thin, short-haired woman wearing pants, a short-sleeved shirt, and (obviously) no undergarments. She looked familiar.

"That takes courage." She smiled. Her teeth were even and white.

"You shouldn't be here," he said. His voice shook and he clenched his fists to hide his shaking. "Are you looking for someone in particular? I can take you to the General."

"I'm looking for you. You're the man they call Brady of Broadway?"

He nodded.

"The man who sells everything, bargains his studio to photograph a war?"

Her comment was too close to his own thoughts—and too personal. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt a flush rise that had nothing to do with the heat. "What do you want?"

"I want you to work for me, Mathew Brady. I will pay for your equipment, take care of your travel, if you shoot pictures for me when and where I say."

She frightened him, a crazy woman standing in a field of dead men. "I run my own business," he said.

She nodded, the smile fading just a little. "And it will bankrupt you. You will die forgotten, your work hidden in crates in government warehouses. That's not why you do this, is it, Mr. Brady?"

"I do this so that people can see what really happens here, so that people can travel through my memories to see this place," he said. The ache in his head grew sharper. This woman had no right to taunt him. "I do this for history."

"And it's history that calls you, Mr. Brady. The question is, will you serve?"

"I already serve," he snapped—and found himself speaking to air. Heat shimmered in front of him, distorting his view of the field for a moment. Then the tall grass and the broken picket fence returned, corpses hovering at the edge of his vision like bales of hay.

He took off his glasses and wiped his eyes. The strain was making him hallucinate. He had been too long in the sun. He would go back to the wagon, get a drink of water, lie in the shade. Then, perhaps, the memory of the hallucination would go away.

But her words haunted him as he retraced his steps. *I will pay for your equipment, take care of your travel.* If only someone would do that! He had spent the entire sum of his fortune and still saw no end ahead. She hadn't been an hallucination: she had been a dream. A wish for a different, easier life that no one would ever fulfill.

1865

The day after Appomatox—the end of the war, Brady dreamed:

He walked the halls of a well-lit place he had never seen before. His footsteps echoed on the shiny floor covering. Walls, made of a smooth material that was not wood or stone, smelled of paint and emollients. Ceiling boxes encased the lamps—the light did not flicker but they flowed cleaner than gaslight. Most of the doors lining the hallway were closed, but one stood open. A sign that shone with a light of its own read:

MATHEW B. BRADY EXHIBIT
OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPHER:
UNITED STATES CIVIL WAR
(1861-1865)

Inside he found a spacious room twice the size of any room he had ever

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seen. It had skylights in the ceiling and doric columns creating a hollow in the center. A camera, set up on its tripod, had its black curtain thrown half back, as if waiting for him to step inside. Next to it stood his wagon, looking out of place and ancient without its horse. The wagon's back door also stood open, and Brady saw the wooden boxes of plates inside, placed neatly, so that a path led to the darkroom. The darkroom looked odd: no one had picked up the sleeping pallets, and yet the chemical baths sat out, ready for use. He would never have left the wagon that way. He shook his head, and turned toward the rest of the room.

Three of the long, wide walls were bare. On the fourth, framed pictures crowded together. He walked to them, saw that they were his portraits, his work from Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg. He even saw a picture of General Lee in his confederate gray. Beneath the portrait, the attribution read *By Brady (or assistant),* but Brady had never taken such a portrait, never developed one, never posed one. A chill ran up his back when he realized he hadn't squinted to read the print. He reached up, touched the bridge of his nose. His glasses were gone. He hadn't gone without glasses since he had been a boy. In the mornings, he had to grab his glasses off the nightstand first, then get out of bed.

His entire wartime collection (with huge gaps) framed, on exhibit. Four thousand portraits, displayed for the world to see, just as he had hoped. He reached out to the Lee portrait. As his finger brushed the smooth wood—

—he found himself beneath the large tree next to the Appomatox farmhouse where the day before Lee and Grant had signed the peace treaty. The farmhouse was a big white blur against the blue of the April sky. He grabbed his glasses (somehow they had fallen to his lap) and hooked the frames around his ears. The world came into sharper focus, the blue-tint easing the glare of the sun. He knew what he had to do. Even though he had arrived too late to photograph the historic signing of the treaty, he could still photograph General Lee one last time in his uniform.

Brady got up and brushed the grass off his pants. His wagon stood beside the farmhouse. The wagon looked proper—dust-covered, mud-spattered, with a few splintered boards and a cock-eyed wheel that he would have to fix very soon—not clean and neat as it had in his dream. The horse, tied to another tree, looked tired, but he would push her with him to Richmond, to General Lee, to complete the exhibit.

Three empty walls, he thought as he went to find his assistant. He wondered why his earlier portraits weren't mounted there. Perhaps the walls awaited something else. Something better.

1866

Brady held his nephew Levin's shoulders and propelled him toward

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the door. The ticket taker at the desk in the lobby of the New York Historical Society waved them past.

"How many today, John?" Brady asked.

"We had a few paying customers yesterday," the large man said, "but they all left after looking at the first wall."

Brady nodded. The society had said they would close the exhibit of his war portraits if attendance didn't go up. But despite the free publicity in the illustrated newspapers and the positive critical response, the public was not attending.

Levin had already gone inside. He stood, hands behind his back, and stared at the portraits of destruction he had been too young to remember. Brady had brought Levin to the exhibit to discourage the boy and make him return to school. He had arrived a few days before, declaring that he wanted to be a photographer like his Uncle Mat. Brady had said twelve was too young to start learning the trade, but Julia had promised Levin a place to stay if no one demanded that he return to school. So far, no one had.

Brady went inside too. The lighting was poor, and the portraits were scattered on several small walls. No doric columns, no wide empty spaces. This was a cramped showing, like so many others he had had, but it shared the emptiness of the gallery in his dreams.

He stared at the portraits, knowing them by heart. They ran in order, from the first glorious parade down Pennsylvania Avenue—taken from his Washington studio—to the last portrait of Lee after Appomatox. Each portrait took him back to the sights and sounds of the moment: the excitement of the parade, the disgust at the carnage, the hopelessness in Lee's eyes. It was here: the recent past, recorded as faithfully as a human being could. One of his reviewers had said that Brady had captured time and held it prisoner in his little glass plates. He certainly held it prisoner in his mind—or it held him. Sometimes all it took was a smell—decaying garbage, horse sweat—and he was back on the battlefield, fighting to live while he took his portraits.

From outside the door, he heard the murmur of voices. He turned in time to see John talking to a woman in widow's weeds. John pointed at Brady. Brady smiled and nodded, knowing he was being identified as the artist behind the exhibit.

The woman pushed open the glass doors and stood in front of Brady. She was slight and older than he expected—in her forties or fifties—with deep lines around her eyes and the corners of her mouth.

"I've come to plead with you, Mr. Brady," she said. Her voice was soft. "I want you to take these portraits away. Over there, you have an image of my husband's body, and in the next room, I saw my son. They're dead, Mr. Brady, and I buried them. I want to think about how they lived, not how they died."

"I'm sorry, ma'am," Brady said. He didn't turn to see which portraits she had indicated. "I didn't mean to offend you. These portraits show

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what war really is, and I think it's something we need to remember, lest we try it again."

Levin had stopped his movement through the gallery. He hadn't turned toward the conversation, but Brady could tell the boy was listening from the cocked position of his head.

"We'll remember, Mr. Brady," the woman said. She smoothed her black skirt. "My whole family has no choice."

She turned her back and walked out, her steps firm and proud. The street door closed sharply behind her. John got up from his chair.

"You've gotten this before," Brady said.

"Every day," John said. "People want to move forward, Mathew. They don't need more reminders of the past."

Brady glanced at his nephew. Levin had moved into one of the back rooms. "Once Levin is done looking at the exhibit, I'll help you remove it," Brady said. "No sense hurting your business to help mine."

He sighed and glanced around the room. Four years of work. Injured associates, ruined equipment, lost wealth, and a damaged business. He had expected acclaim, at least, if not a measure of additional fame. One of his mother's aphorisms rose in his mind: a comment she used to make when he would come inside, covered with dirt and dung. "How the mighty hath fallen," she'd say. She had never appreciated his dreams nor had she lived long enough to see them come true. Now her shade stood beside him, as clearly as she had stood on the porch so many years ago, and he could hear the "I-told-you-so" in her voice.

He shook the apparition away. What his mother had never realized was that the mighty had farther to fall.

1871

That morning, he put on his finest coat, his best hat, and he kissed Julia with a passion he hadn't shown in years. She smiled at him, her eyes filled with tears, as she held the door open for him. He stepped into the hallway, and heard the latch snick shut behind him. Nothing looked different: the gas lamps had sootmarks around the base of the chimneys; the flowered wallpaper peeled in one corner; the stairs creaked as he stepped on them, heading down to the first floor and the street. Only he felt different: the shuddery bubble in his stomach, the tension in his back, the lightheadedness threatening the sureness of his movements.

He stopped on the first landing and took a breath of the musty hotel air. He wondered what they would think of him now, all the great men he had known. They came back to him, like battlefield ghosts haunting a general. Samuel Morse, his large dark eyes snapping, his gnarled hands holding the daguerreotypes, his voice echoing in the room, teaching Brady that photography would cause a revolution—a revolution, boy! —and he had to ride the crest.

"I did," Brady whispered. His New York studio, so impressive in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1850s, had a portrait of Morse hanging near the door for luck. Abraham Lincoln had gazed at that portrait. So had his assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Presidents, princes, actors, assassins had all passed through Brady's door. And he, in his arrogance, had thought his work art, not commerce. Art and history demanded his presence at the first Battle of Bull Run. Commerce had demanded he stay home, take *cartes de visite,* imperials and portraits of soldiers going off to war, of families about to be destroyed, of politicians, great and small.

No. He had left his assistants to do that, while he spent their earnings, his fortune and his future chasing a dream.

And this morning, he would pay for that dream.

So simple, his attorney told him. He would sign his name to a paper, declare bankruptcy, and the government would apportion his assets to his remaining creditors. He could still practice his craft, still attempt to repay his debts, still *live,* if someone wanted to call that living.

He adjusted the jacket one final time and stepped into the hotel's lobby. The desk clerk called out his customary good morning, and Brady nodded. He would show no shame, no anger. The doorman opened the door and cool, manure-tinged air tickled Brady's nostrils. He took a deep breath and walked into the bustle of the morning: Mathew Brady, photographer. A man who had joked with Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, and James Buchanan. A man who had raised a camera against bullets, who had held more dead and dying than half the physicians on the battlefield. Brady pushed forward, touching the brim of his hat each time he passed a woman, nodding at the gentlemen as if this day were the best in his life. Almost everyone had seen his work, in the illustrated papers, in the exhibits, in the halls of Congress itself. He had probably photographed the sons of most of the people who walked these streets. Dead faces, turned toward the sun.

The thought sobered him. These people had lost husbands, fathers, children. Losses greater than his. And they had survived, somehow. Somehow.

He held the thought as he made his way through the morning, listening to the attorney mumble, the government officials drone on, parceling out his possessions like clothing at an orphan's charity. The thought carried him out the door, and back onto the street before the anger burst through the numbness.

The portraits were his children. He and Julia had none—and he had nothing else. Nothing else at all.

"Now are you ready to work with me?"

The female voice was familiar enough that he knew who he would see before he looked up: the crazy woman who haunted him, who wanted him to give everything he had to history.

As if he hadn't given enough.

She stood before him, the winter sunlight backlighting her, and hiding her features in shadow. The Washington crowd walked around her, unseeing, as if she were no more than a post blocking the path.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And what do I get if I help you?" he asked, his voice sounding harsher than he had ever heard it.

"Notice. Acclaim. Pictures on walls instead of buried in warehouses. The chance to make a very real difference."

He glanced back at the dark wooden door, at the moving figures faint in the window, people who had buried his art, given it to the Anthonys, separated it and segregated it and declared it worthless. His children, as dead as the ones he had photographed.

"And you'll pay my way?" he asked.

"I will provide your equipment and handle your travel, if you take photographs for me when and where I say."

"Done," he said, extending a hand to seal the bargain, thinking that a crazy, mannish woman like this one would close a deal like a gentleman. She took his hand, her palm soft, unused to work, and, as she shook it, the world whirled. Colors and pain and dust bombarded him. Smells he would briefly catch, but which by the time he had identified them had disappeared. His head ached, his eyes throbbed, his body felt as if it were being torn in fifteen different directions. And when they stopped, he was in a world of blackness, where hot rain fell like fire from the sky.

"I need you to photograph this," she said, and then she disappeared. In her place, his wagon stood, the only friend in a place of strangeness. The air smelled of burning buildings, of sticky wet, of decay. Death. He recognized it from the battlefields years ago. The horizon was black, dotted with orange flame. The trees rose stunted against the oppression. People—Orientals, he realized with some amazement—ran by him, their strange clothing ripped and torn, their faces burned, peeling, shining with the strange heat. They made no sound as they moved: all he heard was the rain slapping against the road.

He grabbed an old man, stopped him, felt the soft, decaying flesh dissolve between his fingers. "What is this place?" he asked.

The old man reached out a trembling hand, touched Brady's round eyes, his white skin. "Amelican—" the old man took a deep breath and exhaled into a wail that became a scream. He wrenched his arm from Brady's grasp, and started to run. The people around him screamed too, and ran, as if they were fleeing an unseen enemy. Brady grabbed his wagon, rocking with the force of the panicked crowd, and hurried to the far side.

People lay across the grass like corpses on the battlefield. Only these corpses moved. A naked woman swayed in the middle of the ground, her body covered with burns except for large flower-shaped patches all over her torso. And beside him lay three people, their faces melted away, their eyes bubbling holes in their smooth, shiny faces.

"What is this?" he cried out again.

But the woman who had brought him here was gone.

One of the faceless people grabbed his leg. He shook the hand away, trembling with the horror. The rich smell of decay made him want to gag.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He had been in this situation before—in the panic, among the decay, in the death—and he had found only one solution.

He reached inside his wagon and pulled out the camera. This time, though, he didn't scout for artistic composition. He turned the lens on the field of corpses, more horrifying than anything he'd seen under the Pennsylvania sun, and took portrait after portrait after portrait, building an artificial wall of light and shadow between himself and the black rain, the foul stench, and the silent, grasping hands of hundreds of dying people.

1871

And hours—or was it days?—later, after he could no longer move the tripod alone, no longer hold a plate between his fingers, after she appeared and took his wet plates and his equipment and his wagon, after he had given water to more people than he could count, and had torn his suit and felt the sooty rain drops dig into his skin, after all that, he found himself standing on the same street in Washington, under the same sunlit winter sky. A woman he had never seen before peered at him with concern on her wrinkled face and asked, "Are you all right, sir?"

"I'm fine," he said, and felt the lightheadedness that had threatened all morning take him to his knees on the wooden sidewalk. People surrounded him and someone called him by name. They took his arms and half carried him to the hotel. He dimly realized that they had gotten him up the stairs—the scent of lilacs announcing Julia's presence—and onto the bed. Julia's cool hand rested against his forehead and her voice, murmuring something soothing, washed over him like a blessing. He closed his eyes—

And dreamed in jumbled images:

Flowers burned into naked skin; row after row after row of bodies stretched out in a farmer's field, face after face tilted toward the sun; and the faces blend into troops marching under gray skies, General Grant's dust-covered voice repeating that war needs different rules, different players, and General Lee, staring across a porch on a gray April morning, wearing his uniform for the last time, saying softly that being a soldier is no longer an occupation for gentlemen. And through it all, black rain fell from the grey skies, coating everything in slimy heat, burning through skin, leaving bodies ravaged, melting people's clothes from their frames

Brady gasped and sat up. Julia put her arm around him. "It's all right, Mathew," she said. "You were dreaming."

He put his head on her shoulder, and closed his eyes. Immediately, flower-burned skin rose in his vision and he forced his eyelids open. He still wore his suit, but there was no longer a gash in it and the fabric was dry. "I don't know what's wrong with me," he said.

"You just need rest."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He shook his head and got up. His legs were shaky, but the movement felt good. "Think of where we would be if I hadn't gone to Bull Run," he said. "We were rich. We had what we wanted. I would have taken portraits, and we would have made more money. We would have an even nicer studio and a home, instead of this apartment." He smiled a little. "And now the government will sell everything they can, except the portraits. Portraits that no one wants to see."

Julia still sat at the edge of the bed. Her black dress was wrinkled, and her ringlets mussed. She must have held him while he slept.

"You know," he said, leaning against the windowsill. "I met a woman just after the Battle of Gettysburg, and she told me that I would die forgotten with my work hidden in government warehouses. And I thought she was crazy; how could the world forget Brady of Broadway? I had dreams of a huge gallery, filled with my work—"

"Dreams have truth," Julia said.

"No," Mathew said. "Dreams have hope. Dreams without hope are nightmares." He swept his hand around the room. "This is a nightmare, Julia."

She bowed her head. Her hands were clasped together so tightly her knuckles had turned white. Then she raised her head, tossing her ringlets back, and he saw the proud young woman he had married. "So how do we change things, Mathew?"

He stared at her. Even now, she still believed in him, thought that together they could make things better. He wanted to tell her that they would recapture what they had lost; he wanted to give her hope. But he was forty-eight years old, nearly blind, and penniless. He didn't have *time* to rebuild a life from nothing.

"I guess we keep working," he said, quietly. But even as he spoke, a chill ran down his back. He had worked for the crazy woman and she had taken him through the Gates of Hell. And he had nothing to show for it except bad dreams and frightening memories. "I'm sorry, Julia."

"I'm not." She smiled that cryptic smile she had had ever since he married her. "The reward is worth the cost."

He nodded, feeling the rain still hot on his skin, hearing voices call for help in a language he could not understand. He wondered if any reward was worth these kinds of sacrifices.

He didn't think so.

1871

Six weeks later, Brady dreamed:

The exhibit room was colder than it had been before, the lighting better. Brady stood beside his wagon and clutched its wooden frame. He stepped around the wagon, saw that the doors to the exhibit were closed, and he was alone in the huge room. He touched his eyes. The glasses

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were missing, and he could see, just as he had in the previous dreams. His vision was clear, clearer than it had ever been.

No portraits had been added to the far wall. He walked toward his collection and then stopped. He didn't want to look at his old work. He couldn't bear the sight of it, knowing the kind of pain and loss those portraits had caused. Instead he turned and gasped.

Portraits graced a once-empty wall. He ran toward them, nearly tripping over the empty boards of the wagon. Hundreds of portraits framed and mounted at odd angles, glinted under the strange directed lights, the lights that never flickered. He stood closer, saw scenes he'd hoped he would forget: the flowered woman; the three faceless people, their eyes boiling in their sockets; a weeping man, his skin hanging around him like rags. The portraits were clearer, cleaner than the war portraits from the other wall. No dust had gotten in the fluid, no cracked wet plates, no destroyed glass. Clean, crisp portraits, on paper he had never seen before. But it was all his work, clearly his work.

He made himself look away. The air had a metallic smell. The rest of the wall was blank, as were the other two. More pictures to take, more of hell to see. He had experienced the fire and the brimstone, the burning rain—Satan's tears. He wondered what else he would see, what else she would make him record.

He touched the portrait of the men with melted faces. If he had to trade visions like this for his eyesight and his wealth, he wouldn't make the trade. He would die poor and blind at Julia's side.

The air got colder.

He woke up screaming.

1873

Brady stared at the plate he held in his hand. His subject had long since left the studio, but Brady hadn't moved. He remembered days when subject after subject had entered the studio, and his assistants had had to develop the prints while Brady staged the sittings.

"I'll take that, Uncle."

Brady started. He hadn't realized that Levin was in the room. He wondered if Levin had been watching Brady stand there, doing nothing. Although Levin hadn't said anything about it during the past few years, he seemed to notice Brady's growing strange behaviors. "Thank you, Levin," Brady said, making sure his voice was calm.

Levin kept his eyes averted as he grabbed the covered plate and took it into the darkroom for developing. Levin had grown tall in the seven years that he'd been with Brady. Far from the self-assured twelve-year-old who had come to work for his uncle, Levin had become a silent man who came alive only behind the camera lens. Brady couldn't have survived without him, especially after he had to let the rest of his staff go.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brady moved the camera, poured the collodion mixture back into its jar and covered the silver nitrate. Then he washed his hands in the bowl filled with tepid water that sat near the chemical storage.

"I have another job for you. Can you be alone on Friday at four?"

This time, Brady didn't jump, but his heart did. It pounded against his ribcage like a child trying to escape a locked room. His nerves had been on edge for so long. Julia kept giving him hot teas and rubbing the back of his neck, but nothing seemed to work. When he closed his eyes he saw visions he didn't want to see.

He turned, slowly. The crazy woman stood there, her hands clasped behind her back. Since she hadn't appeared in almost two years, he had managed to convince himself that she wasn't real—that he had imagined her.

"Another job?" he asked. He was shaking. Either he hadn't imagined the last one, or he was having another nightmare. "I'm sorry. I can't."

"Can't?" Her cheeks flushed. "You promised, Mathew. I need you."

"You never told me you were going to send me to Hell," he snapped. He moved away from the chemicals, afraid that in his anger, he would throw them. "You're not real, and yet the place you took me stays branded in my mind. I'm going crazy. You're a sign of my insanity."

"No," she said. She came forward and touched him lightly. Her fingertips were soft, and he could smell the faint perfume of her body. "You're not crazy. You're just faced with something from outside your experience. You had dreams about the late War, didn't you? Visions you couldn't escape?"

He was about to deny it, when he remembered now, in the first year of his return, the smell of rotted garbage took him back to the Devil's Hole; how the whinny of a horse made him duck for cover; how he stored his wagon because being inside it filled him with a deep anxiety. "What are you telling me?"

"I come from a place you've never heard of," she said. "We have developed the art of travel in an instant, and our societal norms are different from yours. The place I sent you wasn't Hell. It was a war zone, after the—a country had used a new kind of weapon on another country. I want to send you to more places like that, to photograph them, so that we can display those photographs for people of my society to see."

"If you can travel in an instant—" and he remembered the whirling world, the dancing colors and sounds as he traveled from his world to another "—then why don't you just *take* people there? Why do you need me?"

"Those places are forbidden. I received special dispensation. I'm working on an art project, and I nearly lost my funding because I saw you at Gettysburg."

Brady's shaking eased. "You risked everything to see me?"

She nodded. "We're alike in that way," she said. "You've risked everything to follow your vision, too."

"And you need me?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're the first and the best, Mathew. I couldn't even get funding unless I guaranteed that I would have your work. Your studio portraits are lovely, Mathew, but it's your war photos that make you great."

"No one wants to see my war work," Brady said.

Her smile seemed sad. "They will, Mathew. Especially if you work with me."

Brady glanced around his studio, smaller now than it had ever been. Portraits of great men still hung on the walls along with actors, artists and people who just wanted a remembrance.

"At first it was art for you," she said, her voice husky. "Then it became a mission, to show people what war was really like. And now no one wants to look. But they *need* to, Mathew."

"I know," he said. He glanced back at her, saw the brightness in her face, the trembling of her lower lip. This meant more to her than an art project should. Something personal, something deep, had gotten her involved. "I went to Hell for you, and I never even got to see the results of my work."

"Yes, you did," she said.

"Uncle!" Levin called from the next room.

The woman vanished, leaving shimmering air in her wake. Brady reached out and touched it, felt the remains of a whirlwind. She knew about his dreams, then. Or was she referring to the work he had done inside his wagon on the site, developing plates before they dried so that the portraits would be preserved?

"Did I hear voices?" Levin came out of the back room, wiping his hands on his smock.

Brady glanced at Levin, saw the frown between the young man's brows. Levin was really worried about him. "No voices," Brady said. "Perhaps you just heard someone calling from the street."

"The portrait is done." Levin looked at the chemicals, as if double-checking his uncle's work.

"I'll look at it later," Brady said. "I'm going home to Julia. Can you watch the studio?"

Levin nodded.

Brady grabbed his coat off one of the sitting chairs and stopped at the doorway. "What do you think of my war work, Levin? And be honest, now."

"Honest?"

"Yes."

Brady waited. Levin took a deep breath. "I wish that I were ten years older so that I could have been one of your assistants, Uncle. You preserved something that future generations need to see. And it angers me that no one is willing to look."

"Me, too," Brady said. He slipped his arms through the sleeves of his coat. "But maybe—" and he felt something cautious rise in his chest, something like hope "—if I work just a little harder, people will look again. Think so, Levin?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's one of my prayers, Uncle," Levin said.

"Mine, too," Brady said and let himself out the door. He whistled a little as he walked down the stairs. Maybe the woman was right; maybe he had a future, after all.

1873

Friday at four, Brady whirled from his studio to a place so hot that sweat appeared on his body the instant he stopped whirling. His wagon stood on a dirt road, surrounded by thatched huts. Some of the huts were burning, but the flames were the only movement in the entire village. Far away, he could hear a chop-chop-chopping sound, but he could see nothing. Flies buzzed around him, not landing, as if they had more interesting places to go. The air smelled of burning hay and something fetid, something familiar. He swallowed and looked for the bodies.

He grabbed the back end of the wagon, and climbed inside. The darkness was welcome. It took a moment for his eyes to get used to the gloom, then he grabbed his tripod and his camera and carried them outside. He pushed his glasses up his nose, but his finger encountered skin instead of metal. He could see. He squinted and wondered how she did that—gave him his eyesight for such a short period of time. Perhaps it was his reward for going to Hell.

A hand extended from one of the burning huts. Brady stopped beside it, crouched, and saw a man lying face down in the dust, the back of his head blown away. Bile rose in Brady's throat, and he swallowed to keep his last meal down. He assembled the camera, uncapped the lens, and looked through, seeing the hand and the flames flickering in his narrow, rounded vision. Then he climbed out from under the curtain, went back into the wagon and prepared a plate.

This time he felt no fear. Perhaps knowing that the woman (why had she never told him her name?) could flash him out of the area in an instant made him feel safer. Or perhaps it was his sense of purpose, as strong as it had been at the first battle of Bull Run, when the bullets whizzed by him, and his wagon got stampeded by running soldiers. He had had a reason then, a life then, and he would get it back.

He went outside and photographed the dead man in the burning hut. The chop-chop-choping sound was fading, but the heat seemed to intensify. The stillness in the village was eerie. The crackles of burning buildings made him jump. He saw no more bodies, no evidence other than the emptiness and the fires that anything had happened in this place.

Then he saw the baby.

It was a toddler, actually. Naked, and shot in the back, the body lying at the edge of a ditch. Brady walked over to the ditch and peered in, then stepped back and was sick for the first time in his professional career.

Bodies filled the ditch—women, children, babies, and old men—their limbs flung back, stomachs gone, faces shot away. Blood flowed like a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

river, added its coppery scent to the smell of burning hay and the reek of decay.

He grabbed his camera, his shield, and set it up, knowing that this would haunt him as the hot, slimy rain haunted him still. He prepared more plates, and photographed the toddler over and over, the innocent baby that had tried to crawl away from the horror and had been shot in the back for its attempt at survival.

And as he worked, his vision blurred, and he wondered why the sweat pouring into and out of his eyes never made them burn.

1875

Brady stared at the $25,000 check. He set it on the doily that covered the end table. In the front room, he heard Levin arguing with Julia.

"Not today," she said. "Give him at least a breath between bad news."

Brady touched the thin paper, the flowing script. The government had given him one-quarter of the wealth he had lost going into the war, one-tenth of the money he spent photographing history. And too late. The check was too late. A month earlier, the War Department, which owned the title to the wet plates, had sold them all to the Anthonys for an undisclosed sum. They had clear, legal title, and Edward Anthony had told Brady that they would never, ever sell.

He got up with a sigh and brushed aside the half-open bedroom door. "Tell me what?" he asked.

Levin looked up—guiltily, Brady thought. Julia hid something behind her back. "Nothing, Uncle," Levin said. "It can wait."

"You brought something and I want to know what it is." Brady's voice was harsh. It had been too harsh lately. The flashbacks to the horrors he'd seen on his travels, the strain of keeping silent—of not telling Julia about the fantastical events—and the reversal after reversal in his own life were taking their toll.

Julia brought her hand out from behind her back. She clutched a stereoscope. The small device shook as she handed it to Brady.

He put the lenses up to his eyes, feeling the frame clink against his glasses. The three dimensional view inside was familiar: The war parade he had taken over ten years ago, as the soldiers rode down Pennsylvania Avenue. Brady removed the thick card from the viewer. The two portraits stood side by side, as he expected. He even expected the flowery script on the side, stating that the stereoscopic portrait was available through the Anthonys' warehouse. What he didn't expect was the attribution at the bottom, claiming that the photography had been done by the Anthonys themselves.

He clenched his fists and turned around, letting the device fall to the wooden floor. The stereoscope clinked as it rolled, and Brady stifled an urge to kick it across the room.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We can go to Congressman Garfield," Levin said, "and maybe he'll help us."

Brady stared at the portrait. He could take the Anthonys to court. They did own the rights to the wet plates, but they should have given him proper attribution. It seemed a trivial thing to fight over. He had no money, and what influence he had would be better spent getting the plates back than fighting for a bit of name recognition. "No," Brady said. "You can go to the newspapers, if you like, Levin, but we won't get James to act for us. He's done his best already. This is our fight. And we'll keep at it, until the bitter end if we have to."

Julia clenched her hands together and stared at him. It seemed as if the lines around her mouth had grown deeper. He remembered the first time he'd danced with her, the diamonds around her neck glittering in the candlelight. They had sold those diamonds in 1864 to fund the Petersburg expedition—the expedition in which half of his equipment was destroyed by Confederate shells. *You are going to be a great man,* she had told him. The problem was, he had never asked her what she meant by great. Perhaps she thought of her wealthy father as a great man. Perhaps she stayed with Brady only out of wifely loyalty.

She came over to him and put her arm around him. "I love you, Mathew," she said. He hugged her close, so close that he worried he would hurt her. He wouldn't have been able to do anything without her. None of his work, none of his efforts would have been possible—especially in the lean years—if she hadn't believed in him.

"I'm sorry," he whispered into her shoulder.

She slipped out of his embrace and held him so that she could look into his eyes. "We'll keep fighting, Mathew. And in the end, we'll win."

1877

And the assignments kept coming. Brady began to look forward to the whirling, even though he often ended up in Hell. His body was stronger there; his eyesight keener. He could forget, for a short time, the drabness of Washington, the emptiness of his life. On the battlefields, he worked—and he could still believe that his work had meaning.

One dark, gray day, he left his studio and found himself hiding at the edge of a forest. His wagon, without a horse, leaned against a spindly tree. The air was thick and humid. Brady's black suit clung to his skin, already damp. Through the bushes he could see soldiers carrying large rifles, surrounding a church. Speaking a language he thought he understood—Spanish?—they herded children together. Then, in twos and threes, the soldiers marched the children inside.

The scene was eerily quiet. Brady went behind the wagon, grabbed his tripod and set up the camera. He stepped carefully on the forest bed; the scuffing noise of his heavy leather shoes seemed to resound like gunshots. He took portrait after portrait, concentrating on the soldiers' faces,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the children's looks of resignation. He wondered why the soldiers were imprisoning the children, and what they planned to do to the town he could see just over the horizon. And a small trickle of relief ran through him that here, at least, the children would be spared.

Once the children were inside, the soldiers closed the heavy doors and barred them. Someone had already boarded up the windows. Brady put another plate into his camera to take a final portrait of the closed church before following the army to their nasty work at the village. He looked down, checking the plates the woman had given him, when he heard a whoosh. A sharp, tingling scent rose in his nostrils, followed by the smell of smoke. Automatically he opened the lens—just as a soldier threw a burning torch at the church itself.

Brady screamed and ran out of the bushes. The soldiers saw him—and one leveled a rifle at him. The bullets ratt-a-tatted at him, the sound faster and more vicious than the repeating rifles from the war. Brady felt his body jerk and fall, felt himself roll over, bouncing with each bullet's impact. He wanted to crawl to the church, to save the children, but he couldn't move. He couldn't do anything. The world was growing darker . . . and he saw a kind of light. . . .

And then the whirling began. It seemed slower, and he wasn't sure he wanted it to start. It pulled him away from the light, away from the church and the burning children (he thought he could hear their screams now—loud, terrified, piercing—) and back to the silence of his studio.

He wound up in one of his straightbacked chairs. He tried to stand up, and fell, his glasses jostling the edge of his nose. Footsteps on the stairs ran toward him, then hands lifted him. Levin.

"Uncle? Are you all right?"

"Shot," Brady whispered. "The children. All dead. Must save the children."

He pushed Levin aside and groped for something, anything to hold on to. "I have to get back!" he yelled. "Someone has to rescue those children!"

Levin grabbed his shoulders, forced Brady back to the chair. "The war is over, Uncle," Levin said. "It's over. You're home. You're safe."

Brady looked up at Levin and felt the shakes begin. She wouldn't send him back. She wouldn't let him save those children. She'd known all along that the church would burn—she wanted him to photograph it, to record it, not to stop it. He put his hands over his face. He had seen enough atrocities to last him three lifetimes.

"It's all right," Levin said. "It's all right, Uncle."

It wasn't all right. Levin was becoming an expert at this, at taking Brady home. And to his credit, he never said anything to Julia. "Thank you," Brady said. His words were thin, rushed, as if the bullet holes still riddled his body and sucked the air from it.

He patted Levin on the shoulder, then walked away—walked to the end of the studio, his room, his home. Perhaps the crazy woman *didn't* exist. Perhaps what Levin saw was the truth. Perhaps Brady's mind *was* going, after all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Thank you," he repeated, and walked down the stairs, comforted by the aches in his bones, the blurry edge to his vision. He was home, and he would stay—

Until she called him again. Until he had his next chance to be young, and working, and doing something worthwhile.

1882

Brady sat in front of the window, gazing into the street. Below, carriages rumbled past, throwing up mud and chunks of ice. People hurried across the sidewalk, heads bowed against the sleet. The rippled glass was cold against his fingers, but he didn't care. He could hear Levin in the studio, talking with a prospective client. Levin had handled all of the business this past week. Brady had hardly been able to move.

The death of Henry Anthony shouldn't have hit him so hard. The Anthony Brothers had been the closest thing Brady had to enemies in the years since the war. Yet, they had been friends once, and companions in the early days of the art. All of photography was dying; Morse was gone. Henry Anthony dead. And three of Brady's assistants, men he had trained to succeed him, dead in the opening of the West.

Levin opened the door and peeked in. "Uncle, a visitor," he said.

Brady was about to wave Levin away when another man stepped inside. The man was tall, gaunt, wearing a neatly pressed black suit. He looked official. "Mr. Brady?"

Brady nodded but did not rise.

"I'm John C. Taylor. I'm a soldier, sir, and a student of your work. I would like to talk with you, if I could."

Brady pushed back the needlepoint chair beside him. Taylor sat down, hat in his hands.

"Mr. Brady, I wanted to let you know what I've been doing. Since the end of the war, I've tried to acquire your work. I have secured through various channels, over 7,000 negatives of your best pictures."

Brady felt the haze that surrounded him lift somewhat. "And you would like to display them?"

"No, sir, actually, I've been trying to preserve them. The plates the government bought from you years ago have been sitting in a warehouse. A number were destroyed due to incautious handling. I've been trying to get them placed somewhere else. I have an offer from the Navy Department—I have connections there—and I wanted your approval."

Brady laughed. The sound bubbled from inside of him, but he felt no joy. He had wanted the portraits for so long and finally, here was someone asking for his approval. "No one has asked me what I wanted before."

Taylor leaned back. He glanced once at Levin, as if Brady's odd reaction had made Taylor wary.

"My uncle has gone through quite an odyssey to hold on to his plates," Levin said softly. "He has lost a lot over the years."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"From the beginning," Brady said. "No one will ever know what I went through in securing the negatives. The whole world can never appreciate it. It changed the course of my life. Some of those negatives nearly cost me that life. And then the work was taken from me. Do you understand, Mr. Taylor?"

Taylor nodded. "I've been tracking these photographs for a long time, sir. I remembered them from the illustrated papers, and I decided that they needed to be preserved, so that my children's children would see the devastation, would learn the follies we committed because we couldn't reason with each other."

Brady smiled. A man who *did* understand. Finally. "The government bought my portraits of Webster, Calhoun, and Clay. I got paid a lot of money for those paintings that were made from my photographs. Not *my* work, mind you. *Paintings* of my work. Page would have been so happy."

"Sir?"

Brady shook his head. Page had left his side long ago. "But no one wants to see the war work. No one wants to see what you and I preserved. I don't want the Navy to bury the negatives. I want them to display the work, reproduce it or make it into a book that someone can *see*."

"First things first, Mr. Brady," Taylor said. "The Navy has the negatives I've acquired, but we need to remove the others from the War Department before they're destroyed. And then you, or your nephew, or someone else can go in there and put together a showing."

Brady reached over and gripped Taylor's hands. They were firm and strong—a young man's hands on an older man's body. "If you can do that," Brady said. "You will have made all that I've done worthwhile."

1882

Julia huddled on the settee, a blanket over her slight frame. She had grown gaunt, her eyes big saucers on the planes of her face. Her hands shook as she took the letter from Brady. He had hesitated about giving it to her, but he knew that she would ask and she would worry. It would be better for her frail heart to know than to constantly fret. She leaned toward the lamp. Brady watched her eyes move as she read.

He already knew the words by heart. The letter was from General A.W. Greeley, in the War Department. He was in charge of the government's collection of Brady's work. After the opening amenities, he had written:

> The government has stated positively that their negatives must not be exploited for commercial purposes. They are the historical treasures of a whole people and the government has justly refused to establish a dangerous system of "special privilege" by granting permission for publication to individuals. As the property of the people, the government negatives are held in sacred trust . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where no one could see them, and not even Brady himself could use them. He wondered what Taylor thought—Taylor who would have received the letter in Connecticut by now.

Julia looked up, her eyes dotted with tears. "What do they think, that you're going to steal the plates from them like they stole them from you?"

"I don't know," Brady said. "Perhaps they really don't understand what they have."

"They understand," Julia said, her voice harsh. "And it frightens them."

1883

In his dreams, he heard the sounds of people working. Twice he had arrived at the door to his gallery, and twice it had been locked. Behind the thin material, he heard voices—"Here, Andre. No, no. Keep the same years on the same wall space"—and the sounds of shuffling feet. This time, he knocked and the door opened a crack.

Ceiling lights flooded the room. It was wide and bright—brighter than he imagined a room could be.

His work covered all the walls but one. People, dressed in pants and loose shirts like the woman who hired him, carried framed portraits from one spot to the next, all under the direction of a slim man who stood next to Brady's wagon.

The man looked at Brady. "What do you want?"

"I just wanted to see—"

The man turned to one of the others walking through. "Get rid of him, will you? We only have a few hours, and we still have one wall to fill."

A woman stopped next to Brady and put her hand on his arm. Her fingers were cool. "I'm sorry," she said. "We're preparing an exhibit."

"But I'm the artist," Brady said.

"He says—"

"I know what he says," the man said. He squinted at Brady, then glanced at a portrait that hung near the wagon. "And so he is. You should be finishing the exhibit, Mr. Brady, not gawking around the studio."

"I didn't know I had something to finish."

The man sighed. "The show opens tomorrow morning, and you still have one wall to fill. What are you doing here?"

"I don't know," Brady said. The woman took his arm and led him out the door.

"We'll see you tomorrow night," she said. And then she smiled. "I like your work."

And then he woke up, shivering and shaking in the dark beside Julia. Her even breathing was a comfort. He drew himself into a huddle and rested his knees against his chest. One wall to fill by tomorrow? He wished he understood what the dreams meant. It had taken him nearly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

twenty years to fill all the other walls. And then he thought that perhaps dream time worked differently than real time. Perhaps dream time moved in an instant, the way he did when the woman whirled him away to another place.

It was just a dream, he told himself, and by the time he fell back to sleep, he really believed it.

1884

By the time the wagon appeared beside him, Brady was shaking. This place was silent, completely silent. Houses stood in neat rows on barren, brown treeless land. Their white formations rested like sentries against the mountains that stood in the distance. A faint smell, almost acrid, covered everything. The air was warm, but not muggy, and beads of sweat rose on his arms like drops of blood.

Brady had arrived behind one of the houses. Inside, a family sat around the table—a man, a woman and two children. They all appeared to be eating—the woman had a spoon raised to her mouth—but no one moved. In the entire time he had been there, no one had moved.

He went into his wagon, removed the camera and tripod, then knocked on the door. The family didn't acknowledge him. He pushed the door open and stepped inside, setting up the camera near a gleaming countertop. Then he walked over to the family. The children had been frozen in the act of laughing, gazing at each other. Their chests didn't rise and fall, their eyes didn't move. The man had his hand around a cup full of congealed liquid. He was watching the children, a faint smile on his face. The woman was looking down, at the bowl filled with a soggy mush. The hand holding the spoon—empty except for a white stain in the center—had frozen near her mouth. Brady touched her. Her skin was cold, rigid.

They were dead.

Brady backed away, nearly knocking over the tripod. He grabbed the camera, felt its firmness in his hands. For some reason, these specters frightened him worse than all the others. He couldn't tell what had killed them or how they died.

It had become increasingly difficult, at the many varied places he had been, but usually he could at least guess. Here, he saw nothing—and the bodies didn't even feel real.

He climbed under the dark curtain, finding a kind of protection from his own equipment. Perhaps, near his own stuff, whatever had killed them would avoid him. He took the photograph, and then carried his equipment to the next house, where a frozen woman sat on a sofa, looking at a piece of paper. In each house, he captured the still, frozen lives, almost wishing for the blood, the stench, the fires, the signs of destruction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1885

Brady folded the newspaper and set it down. He didn't wish to disturb Julia, who was sleeping soundly on the bed. She seemed to get so little rest these days. Her face had become translucent, the shadows under her eyes so deep that they looked like bruises.

He couldn't share the article with her. A year ago, she might have laughed. But now, tears would stream down her cheeks and she would want him to hold her. And when she woke up, he *would* hold her, because he knew that they had so little time left.

She didn't need to see the paragraph that stood out from the page as if someone had expanded the type:

> *. . . and with his loss, all of photography's pioneers are dead. In the United States alone we have lost, in recent years, Alexander Gardiner, Samuel F.B. Morse, Edward and Henry Anthony, and Mathew B. Brady. Gardiner practiced the craft until his death, going west and sending some of the best images back home. The Anthonys sold many of their fine works in stereoscope for us all to see. Morse had other interests and quit photography to pursue them. Brady lost his eyesight after the War, and closed his studios here and in New York . . .*

Perhaps he was wrong. Perhaps they wouldn't have laughed together. Perhaps she would have been as angry as he was. He hadn't died. He *hadn't.* No one allowed him to show his work any more. He hadn't even been to the gallery of his dreams since that confusing last dream, years ago.

Brady placed the newspaper with the others near the door. Then he crawled onto the bed and pulled Julia close. Her small body was comforting, and, in her sleep, she turned and held him back.

1886

One morning, he whirled into a place of such emptiness it chilled his soul. The buildings were tall and white, the grass green, and the flowers in bloom. His wagon was the only black thing on the surface of this place. He could smell lilacs as he walked forward, and he thought of Julia resting at their apartment—too fragile now to even do her needlepoint.

This silence was worse than at the last place. Here it felt as if human beings had never touched this land, despite the buildings. He felt as if he were the only person left alive.

He walked up the stone steps of the first building and pushed open the glass door. The room inside was empty—as empty as his gallery had been when he first dreamed it. No dust or footprints marred the white floor,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no smudges covered the white walls. He looked out the window, and, as he watched, a building twenty yards away shimmered and disappeared.

Brady shoved his hands in his pockets and scurried outside. Another building disappeared. This shimmering was different, more ominous than the shimmering left by his benefactress; in it, somehow, he could almost see the debris, the dust from the buildings that had once been there. He could *feel* the destruction, and knew that these places weren't reappearing somewhere else. He ran to his wagon, climbed inside, and peered out at the world from the wagon's edge. And, as he watched, building after building winked out of existence.

He clutched the camera to him, but took no photographs. The smell of lilacs grew stronger. His hands were cold, shaking. He watched the buildings disappear until only a grassy field remained.

"You can't even photograph it."

Her appearance didn't surprise him. He expected her, after seeing the changes, perhaps because he had been thinking of her. Her hair was shoulder-length now, but other than that, she hadn't changed in all the years since he'd last seen her.

"It's so clean and neat." Her voice shook. "You can't even tell that anyone died here."

Brady crawled out of the wagon and stood beside her. He felt more uneasy here than he had felt under the shelling at the first battle of Bull Run. There, at least, he could *hear* the whistle, *feel* the explosions. Here the destruction came from nowhere.

"Welcome to war in my lifetime, Mathew." She crossed her arms in front of her chest. "Here we get rid of *everything,* not just a person's body, but all traces of their home, their livelihood—and, in most cases, any memories of them. I lost my son like this, and I couldn't remember that he had even existed until I started work on this project." She smiled just a little. "The time travel gives unexpected benefits, some we can program for, like improved eyesight or health, and some we can't, like improved memories. The scientists say it has something to do with molecular rearrangement, but that makes no sense to you, since no one knew what a molecule was in your day."

He stood beside her, his heart pounding in his throat. She turned to him, took his hand in hers.

"We can't go any farther than this, Mathew."

He frowned. "I'm done?"

"Yes. I can't thank you in the ways that I'd like. If I could, I'd send you back, give you money, let you rebuild your life from the war on. But I can't. We can't. But I *can* bring you to the exhibit when it opens, and hope that the response is what we expect. Would you like that, Mathew?"

He didn't know exactly what she meant, and he wasn't sure he cared. He wanted to keep making photographs, to keep working here with her. He had nothing else. "I could still help you. I'm sure there are a number of things to be done."

She shook her head, then kissed his forehead. "You need to go home

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to your Julia, and enjoy the time you have left. We'll see each other again, Mathew."

And then she started to whirl, to shimmer. Brady reached for her and his hand went through her into the heated air. This shimmer was different, somehow; it had a life to it. He felt a thin relief. She had traveled beyond him, but not out of existence. He leaned against the edge of his wagon and stared at the lilac bushes and the wind blowing through the grasses, trying to understand what she had just told him. He and the wagon sat alone, in a field where people had once built homes and lived quiet lives. Finally, at dusk, he too shimmered out of the blackness, and back to his own quiet life.

1887

Only Levin and Brady stood beside the open grave. The wind ruffled Brady's hair, dried the tear tracks on his cheeks. He hadn't realized how small Julia's life had become. Most of the people at the funeral had been *his* friends, people who had come to console *him*.

He could hear the trees rustling behind him. The breeze carried a scent of lilacs—how appropriate, Julia dying in the spring, so that her flower would bloom near her grave. She had been so beautiful when he'd met her, so popular. She had whittled her life down for him, because she had thought he needed her. And he had.

Levin took Brady's arm. "Come along, Uncle," Levin said.

Brady looked up at his nephew, the closest thing to a child he and Julia had ever had. Levin's hair had started to recede, and he too wore thick glasses.

"I don't want to leave her," Brady said. "I've left her too much already."

"It's all right, Uncle," Levin said as he put his arm around Brady's waist and led him through the trees. "She understands."

Brady glanced back at the hole in the ground, at his wife's coffin, and at the two men who had already started to shovel dirt on top. "I know she understands," he said. "She always has."

1887

That night, Brady didn't sleep. He sat on the bed he had shared with Julia, and clutched her pillow against his chest. He missed her even breathing, her comfortable presence. He missed her hand on his cheek and her warm voice, reassuring him. He missed holding her, and loving her, and telling her how much he loved her.

It's all right, Uncle, Levin had said. *She understands.*

Brady got up, set the pillow down, and went to the window. She had looked out so many times, probably feeling alone, while he pursued his dreams of greatness. She had never said what she thought these past

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

few years, but he saw her look at him, saw the speculation in her eyes when he returned from one of his trips. She had loved him too much to question him.

Then he felt it: the odd sensation that always preceded a whirling. But he was *done*—he hadn't been sent anywhere in over a year. He was just tired, just—

spinning. Colors and pain and dust bombarded him. Spinning. And when he stopped, he stood in the gallery of his dreams . . . only this time, he knew that he was wide awake.

It existed then. It really existed.

And it was full of people.

Women wore long clingy dresses in a shining material. Their hair varied in hue from brown to pink, and many had jewelry stapled into their noses, their cheeks and, in one case, along the rim of the eye. The men's clothes were as colorful and as shiny. They wore makeup, but no jewelry. A few people seemed out of place, in other clothes—a woman in combat fatigues from one of the wars Brady had seen, a man in dust-covered denim pants and a ripped shirt, another man dressed in all black leaning against a gallery door. All of the doors in the hallway were open and people spilled in and out, conversing or holding shocked hands to their throats.

The conversation was so thick that Brady couldn't hear separate voices, separate words. A variety of perfumes overwhelmed him and the coolness seemed to have left the gallery. He let the crowd push him down the hall toward his own exhibit and as he passed, he caught bits and pieces of other signs:

. . . IMAGE ARTIST . . .
. . . (2000-2010) . . .
. . . HOLOGRAPHER, AFRICAN BIOLOGICAL . . .
. . . ABC CAMERAMAN, LEBANON . . .
. . . PHOTOJOURNALIST, VIETNAM CONFLICT . . .
. . . (1963) . . .
. . . NEWS REELS FROM THE PACIFIC THEATER . . .
. . . OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPHER, WORLD WAR I . . .
. . . (1892- . . .
. . . INDIAN WARS . . .

And then his own:

MATHEW B. BRADY EXHIBIT
OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPHER:
UNITED STATES CIVIL WAR
(1861-1865)

The room was full. People stood along the walls, gazing at his portraits, discussing and pointing at the fields of honored dead. One woman turned away from the toddler, shot in the back; another from the burning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

church. People looked inside Brady's wagon, and more than a few stared at the portraits of him, lined along the doric columns like a series of somber, aging men.

He caught a few words:

"Fantastic composition" . . . "amazing things with black and white" . . . "almost looks real" . . . "turns my stomach" . . . "can't imagine working with such primitive equipment" . . .

Someone touched his shoulder. Brady turned. A woman smiled at him. She wore a long purple gown and her brown hair was wrapped around the top of her head. It took a moment for him to recognize his benefactress.

"Welcome to the exhibit, Mathew. People are enjoying your work."

She smiled at him and moved on. And then it hit him. He finally had an exhibit. He finally had people staring at his work, and seeing what had really happened in all those places during all that time. She had shown him this gallery all his life, whirled him when he thought he was asleep. This was his destiny, just as dying improvished in his own world was his destiny.

"You're the artist?" A slim man in a dark suit stood beside Brady.

"This is my work," Brady said.

A few people crowded around. The scent of soap and perfume nearly overwhelmed him.

"I think you're an absolutely amazing talent," the man said. His voice was thin, with an accent that seemed British but wasn't. "I can't believe the kind of work you put into this to create such stark beauty. And with such bulky equipment."

"Beauty?" Brady could barely let the word out of his throat. He gazed around the room, saw the flowered woman, the row of corpses on the Gettysburg Battlefield.

"Eerie," a woman said. "Rather like late Goya, don't you think, Lavinia?"

Another woman nodded. "Stunning, the way you captured the exact right light, the exact moment to illuminate the concept."

"Concept?" Brady felt his hands shake. "You're looking at *war* here. People died in these portraits. This is history, not art."

"I think you're underestimating your work," the man said. "It is truly art, and you are a great, great artist. Only an artist would see how to use black and white to such a devastating effect—"

"I wasn't creating art," Brady said. "My assistants and I, we were shot at. I nearly died the day the soldiers burned that church. This isn't beauty. This is war. It's truth. I wanted you to see how ugly war really is."

"And you did it so well," the man said. "I truly admire your technique." And then he walked out of the room. Brady watched him go. The women smiled, shook his hand, told him that it was a pleasure to meet him. He wandered around the room, heard the same types of conversation and stopped when he saw his benefactress.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"They don't understand," he said. "They think this was done for them, for their appreciation. They're calling this art."

"It is art, Mathew," she said softly. She glanced around the room, as if she wanted to be elsewhere.

"No," he said. "It actually happened."

"A long time ago." She patted his hand. "The message about war and destruction will go home in their subconscious. They will remember this." And then she turned her back on him and pushed her way through the crowd. Brady tried to follow her, but made it only as far as his wagon. He sat on its edge and buried his face in his hands.

He sat there for a long time, letting the conversation hum around him, wondering at his own folly. And then he heard his name called in a voice that made his heart rise.

"Mr. Brady?"

He looked up and saw Julia. Not the Julia who had grown pale and thin in their small apartment, but the Julia he had met so many years ago. She was slender and young, her face glowing with health. No gray marked her ringlets, and her hoops were wide with a fashion decades old. He reached out his hands. "Julia."

She took his hands and sat beside him on the wagon, her young-girl face turned in a smile. "They think you're wonderful, Mr. Brady."

"They don't understand what I've done. They think it's art—" he stopped himself. This wasn't his Julia. This was the young girl, the one who had danced with him, who had told him about her dream. She had come from a different place and a different time, the only time she had seen the effects of his work.

He looked at her then, really looked at her, saw the shine in her blue eyes, the blush to her cheeks. She was watching the people look at his portraits, soaking in the discussion. Her gloved hand clutched his, and he could feel her wonderment and joy.

"I would be so proud if this were my doing, Mr. Brady. Imagine a room like this filled with your vision, your work."

He didn't look at the room. He looked at her. This moment, this was what kept her going all those years. The memory of what she thought was a dream, of what she hoped would become real. And it *was* real, but not in any way she understood. Perhaps, then, he didn't understand it either.

She turned to him, smiled into his face. "I would so like to be a part of this," she said. She thought it was a dream; otherwise she would have never spoken so boldly. No, wait. She had been bold when she was young.

"You will be," Brady said. And until that moment, he never realized how much a part of it she had been, always standing beside him, always believing in him even when he no longer believed in himself. She had made the greater sacrifice—her entire life for his dream, his vision, his work.

"Julia," he said, thankful for this last chance to touch her, this last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chance to hold her. "I could not do this without you. You made it all possible."

She leaned against him and laughed, a fluted sound he hadn't heard in decades. "But it's *your* work that they admire, Mr. Brady. Your work."

"They call me an artist."

"That's right." Her words were crisp, sure. "An artist's work lives beyond him. This isn't our world, Mr. Brady. In the other rooms, the pictures move."

The pictures move. He had been given a gift, to see his own future. To know that the losses he suffered, the reversals he and Julia had lived through weren't all for nothing. How many people got even that?

He tucked her arm in his. He had to be out of this room, out of this exhibit he didn't really understand. They stood together, her hoop clearing a path for them in the crowd. He stopped and surveyed the four walls—filled with his portraits, portraits of places most of these people had never seen—his memories that they shared and made their own.

Then he stepped out of the exhibit into a future in which he would never take part, perhaps to gain a perspective he had never had before.

And all the while, Julia remained beside him.

—for Dean

NEXT ISSUE

(continued from page 85)

comes "Manassas, Again"; new writer **R. Garcia y Robertson** then takes us from the distant future to the distant past, sweeping us along with a bumbling crew of time-traveling documentary film-makers who are headed back to the turbulent days of Alexander the Great's campaigns of conquest to film one of the decisive battles of world history, in a vivid, funny, and action-packed novella that will have you on the edge of your seat "By the Time We Got to Gaugamela"; World Fantasy Award-winner **Tanith Lee** takes us to an eerie ruined city of the far future, full of strange dangers and stranger beauties, for the terrifying and lushly decadent story of "Venus Rising on Water"; Nebula-winner **Geoffrey A. Landis** spins a taut and suspenseful tale of an astronaut shipwrecked on the Moon who must deal with "A Walk in the Sun" in order to survive; and **Robert Frazier**—who just won our Readers' Award for the year's Best Poem—returns with the wry, funny, and literally out-of-this-world story of "How I Met My First Wife, Juanita." Plus an array of columns and features. Look for our October issue on sale on your newsstands on August 20, 1991.

COMING SOON: coming up in our November special Double Issue, **Isaac Asimov's** first new Foundation novella in forty-one years, plus much, much more!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON BOOKS

by Baird Searles

Double Pros

The Singers of Time

By Frederik Pohl & Jack Williamson
Doubleday, $21.95 (hardcover),
$10.95 (paper)

The situation is this. A couple of centuries in the future Earth has been conquered by an alien race. No, conquered is not quite the right word. Let's say taken over, since their technology and economic cleverness has essentially led to their cultural and commercial domination over humanity, bringing peace and stagnation in its wake. The aliens are known as the "Turtles," due to their carapaces; they ingest matter, but essentially their energy is derived from hard radiation, due to the peculiar state of their planetary system.

Humans have learned little about the Turtles' physiological and social life, but it seems that their religion centers around a Great Mother, and as it happens, they do breed like insects, with one female queen who is periodically replaced by a nymph when worn out or otherwise debilitated. The Turtles have also introduced to humanity the Taurs, a minotauroid race that makes delicious eating and has become staple food for humans. They are also intelligent enough to use for simple tasks. (Even for a committed misanthrope, humanity's acceptance of this is a little hard to swallow—no pun intended.) Except for a limited breeding stock, the dangerous adult males are castrated.

Suddenly a disaster hits the Turtles; it turns out their planet and more importantly their Mother have disappeared. And the Turtles must turn to abandoned human knowledge such as physics, which they have regarded as superstition, to find an answer. So an expedition with a most motley crew sets out. It contains two Turtles; a young woman fleeing with her pet Taur to keep him from a fate worse than death; a set of twins who have, as it were, sold out to the Turtles (one of whom believes passionately in the revival of human knowledge and is illicitly studying ancient computer chips of physics lectures) and the twins' mutual lover. The captain is one Francis Krake, an American pilot picked up by the Turtles in the battle of the Coral Sea (WW II), when they first began collecting samples of humanity for study, and the only human allowed to run his own interstellar ship (which is called "The Golden Hind"—Francis Krake, Golden Hind—get it?). His crew of two are humans saved from death by the Turtles by being re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

built as androids.

Alternating with the chapters of this story are excerpts from the physics lectures the one twin is studying (mostly on Hawking, but not entirely). These are framed by short paragraphs about the mysterious *aoidoi,* to whom the physics lectures are songs and who sing back songs which the Taurs love to hear, the humans cannot hear, and the Turtles ignore. The suspense is provided by the question of what has happened to the Turtle Mother planet, and what the *aoidoi* have to do with all this. Finding out is hardly tedious, though this is not exactly top drawer Frederik Pohl *or* Jack Williamson, or even Pohl/Williamson. Nevertheless, these two old pros give us better in *The Singers of Time* than most of what the younger crowd is coming up with these days.

Double Feature

The Little Country

By Charles de Lint

Morrow, $22.95

Charles de Lint does a perilous balancing act in his new, fat novel called *The Little Country.* He tells two stories at once, with different characters, plot, setting (more or less), and levels of fantasy, in alternating chapters.

There is a connection between the two that is both direct and tenuous at the same time. A major factor in story A (as we shall call it) is a book, written by an author famous for one novel only, a fantasy published many years ago which has become a minor classic (though he published a second). Our heroine, Jane Little—a granddaughter of this author's best friend—by accident discovers a *third* novel in the form of a book which says on the copyright page, "Published in an edition of one copy." The title of the book is *The Little Country.*

Story B (in alternating chapters) is *The Little Country* itself. The book is magic, but not in any ordinary sense. It's also a story, a fantasy, and the mere opening and reading of it sets loose—well, de Lint gets a little esoteric here, but a power that is badly wanted by a sort of occult organization whose leaders are among the movers and shakers of the world. Janey, finding the book, sets waves in motion that get the villains on the right track. A varied lot descend on the small Cornish village where she and her grandfather live. This story is low key fantasy, verging on the occult that manifests itself in subtle ways such as the fact that everyone who reads the book reads a different story with only certain common elements, such as the Men-an-Tol, an ancient standing stone in the nearby countryside. The action (again talking only Story A) mainly concerns the efforts of Janey, who is a minor folk music recording star, and her friends in outwitting the world-class villains set against them.

As for the narrative of Story B, it's a good deal more overtly fantasy, taking place in a fictional Cornish village obviously based on the one in Story A; it also has a Men-an-Tol, the only absolutely specific reference shared between the two stories. It has to do with Jodi, a gaminish young woman of eighteen (who lives with her kindly aunt who runs a bordello),

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her collection of eccentric friends and their battle with the town witch. Jodi has incurred her enmity by invading her house out of curiosity to see the "Small" that the witch reputedly owns. (Smalls are not to be confused with piskies, i.e., Cornish pixies.) Things get very complicated indeed in this story; the "Small" turns out to be a mechanical simulacrum inhabited by the psyche of a young male elfin being from another world, the "Barrow World," which has become separated from Jodi/Janey's world, "the Iron World." But it can be reached perhaps through the Men-an-Tol.

The witch turns Jodi herself into a Small, which obviously complicates her efforts and those of her friends to put matters right. There's no room to go into the complexities of both plots, which are thoroughly inventive. The witch's fetch is a particularly felicitous (if such a word can be used for such a creature) creation. In fact, the creatures that the witch summons up are wonderfully creepy and put the human villains of Story A to shame, though one of *them* is a sadistic maniac, perhaps too heavily handed so for a basically light fantasy.

I have a couple of quibbles with de Lint's intertwined double feature. The two stories are a little too similar in texture, despite the differences I've cited. And one, of course, keeps wondering how they will intersect when they do. They do, indeed, but it's less a simultaneous climax than a brief encounter. Nevertheless, you're kept involved by both. And I must, to conclude, cite a personal bias—Story A is set in a Cornish village called Mousehole (and pronounced Mouzel). I have been to Cornwall—it is a magic place; and I have been to Mousehole—and *it* is a magic place. And de Lint has captured that magic.

Double Czech

War With the Newts
By Karel Čapek
Northwestern University Press,
$29.95 (cloth); $9.95 (paper)

Nine Fairy Tales (and One More Thrown in for Good Measure)
By Karel Čapek
Northwestern University Press,
$24.95 (cloth); $10.95 (paper)

Now we all know that the word "robot" comes from a play by the Czech writer Karel Čapek (we *do* know that, don't we?), from a root word having to do with the service owed by the feudal peasantry to the aristocracy. The play, *R.U.R.*, is more or less well known, though one is hard put to think of any recent productions. Perhaps it's done on college campuses; it's certainly one of those things that PBS, for instance, could and should do rather than some of the garbage they spend their money on. But we're off on a soap box, aren't we? Back to the subject, Čapek.

There are two important reprints of Čapek works that are *not R.U.R.* One is a novel, *War With the Newts*, that has been seen in print several times in the past few decades, so it's not a totally unknown quantity. (This particular reprint was, in fact, done some years back but it's being remarketed to go with the other one.) The theme is the struggle with an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

alien—though Earth-born—race of giant, intelligent newts (*newts?* yes, newts) from their exploitation by humanity through their eventual revolt and attempt to take over the Earth. It's heavy, Middle European, midcentury allegory, but still very readable.

The other is a slightly different kettle of fish. Its full title is *Nine Fairy Tales by Karel Čapek and One More Thrown in for Good Measure,* and it's utterly charming. The fairy tales can be taken as Meaningful, but they aren't weighted down. They concern such things as magicians, elves, princesses, talking frogs, and a lot of water sprites. My favorite of the lot is "The Great Police Tale" which has to do with a group of policemen in the station house telling of various encounters. One mentioned the water sprite from Fidgety Weir that was named Chief City Water Sprite by the Prague Sanitary District and put on the payroll (it was his job to be sure the Moldau didn't dry out) while another mentioned the will-o'-the-wisps that bothered people by dancing all night in Charles Square. The City Council moved them to City Park and had them lit at night and put out at dawn by an employee of the gasworks. Yet another tells the story of a hydra egg he came across and took to the city lost-and-found, which thereupon hatched. An ad was placed in the papers: "FOUND—Hydra Puppy freshly hatched from egg. Seven-headed, yellow, tiger-striped. Call or claim it in person at police headquarters . . ." All sorts of complications develop, including whether a person changed into an animal should be lodged at a shelter for the homeless or the SPCA.

The nearest I can come in description of these tales is Thurberesque, and if modern whimsy isn't your cup of tea, skip it. Otherwise, they are great fun, translated with flair by Dagmar Herrmann, and with captivating illustrations by the author's brother, Josef, who died in a concentration camp.

Doublets & Tricornes & Trolls

Goblin Moon
By Teresa Edgerton
Ace, $4.50 (paper)

Lackaday! How can one presume to encompass, within so small a space, such a labyrinthian and mix'd melange of plot and event, not to mention such a complex background as that put forth by that eminent authoress, Miss Teresa Edgerton, in her newest book, *Goblin Moon.*

It's no use. I can't keep that up, and even if I could, you'd find it unreadable after a paragraph or two. Yet somehow Edgerton gives the impression of that sort of style, without laying it on too thick in any way or making it difficult for the reader at all. Need one say this gives a distinctly eighteenth-century air to the novel, which is only right since the plot and the background are redolent of that period, while being as satisfying a modern fantasy as one could wish?

The action takes place in Thornburg-on-the-Lunn, a large city on the River Lunn in the country of Imbria. There is a continent called Euterpe, and the far countries of Spagne and Ynde. It is a cul-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ture of sedan chairs, doublets and tricornes, of powdered hair for the men, bombazine for proper young ladies, and daring décolletage for those not so. It is a society that should be so familiar as to be boring to those who know anything of mundane history, and yet Edgerton has worked fantasy and magic into the very fabric of this culture.

As for plot, it is a fantastical novel as might be told by a Brontë, with a touch of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* a heroine that could be from Thackeray (impoverished gentry living with rich relatives), and a hero from the works of Emmuska Magdalena Rosalia Marie Josepha, Baroness Orczy (come on now, think—you got it—*The Scarlet Pimpernel).* There are chapter headings such as "Which the Sensitive reader may want to Omit, but Ought to read, nevertheless," and "Containing sundry Curious matters."

This is all very well, you say—but where *is* the fantasy? Well, the story begins with the discovery by river scavengers of a coffin floating in the river Lunn, containing a suspiciously well-preserved corpse of a scholarly gentleman and some equally well preserved books. These aren't ordinary scavengers—Caleb is well-educated and acquainted with Gottfried Jenk, an alchemical type, to whom he delivers the coffin and the books (which fall to pieces if removed from the corpse's vicinity). This sets in motion a series of events of staggering complexity, but more or less centering around the efforts of Caleb and Jenk to produce the mystical stone Seramarias (vaguely equivalent to the Philosopher's Stone) and to create a living homunculus. This work, they believe, is being sponsored by the Duke of Zar-Wildungen, but it is really the Duchess, for her own nefarious purposes. She is one hundred and eighty years old; her mother was a half-breed, human and Farisee; her father a full-blooded fairy. I've saved the best of Edgerton's invention to last—this is a multi-racial society, where dwarves have their own subculture, magical guilds, and section of town; where hobgoblins prey on unwary residents at night; where those of fairy blood, such as the Duchess, weave their own vengeful schemes; and where trolls, who were not created by any of the Nine Powers but may be a mongrel race or a breed of men altered by their own magic, walk among humans identifiable only by a single freakish part of their anatomy (which can vary by individual). And speaking of the Nine Powers, this, needless to say, is hardly a Christian culture—Edgerton has invented a wonderfully glamorous religion of which she tells just enough. In all, this is a stylish and inventive novel, with a unique flavor interweaving the best of the romantical reality of a particular period of history with a highly original use of fantasy elements.

Shoptalk

Sequels, prequels, series and whatnot . . . A Time of Exile is a "novel of the westlands" by Katherine Kerr and is another of the intriguing Deverry novels, this one having more to do with the elves (Doubleday, $21.95 hardcover,

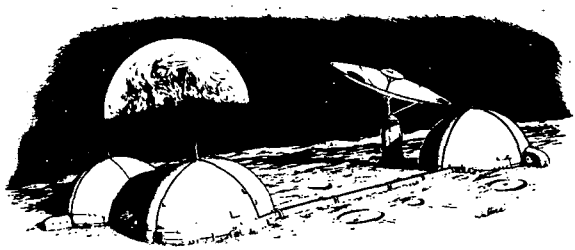
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

$10.95 paperback).

Small presses, bless 'em . . . For you aspiring pros in prose out there, by all means pay attention to *The Professional Writer's Guide to Writing Professionally,* a new Science Fiction Writers of America handbook edited by Kristine Kathryn Rusch and Dean Wesley Smith, which contains articles on the pertinent subject by Niven, Card, Bear, Knight, de Lint, and a galaxy of other luminaries who should know what they're talking about (Pulphouse Publishing [Box 1227, Eugene OR 97440], $10.00, paper, and I suggest you contact the publisher for further details on ordering). . . . The same publisher has just come up with an idea whose time may or may not have come . . . short stories published as individual volumes. The list as of this writing includes "Ecce Hominid" by Esther M. Friesner, "A Case of Mistaken Identity" by L. Timmel Duchamp, "The Cutter" by Edward Bryant, "The Girl Who Fell into the Sky" by Kate Wilhelm, "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" by Robert Bloch, "Losers' Night" by Poul Anderson, "A Case of Painter's Ear" by John Brunner, "Xolotl!" by Robert Sheckley, "All the Clocks Are Melting" by Bruce Boston, and "Blossoms" by Kim Antieau. (Interesting problem there not handled by Strunk so far as I know . . . they're short stories, so the titles should be in quotes, but they're also individual books, so should be in italics. I'll let my omniscient editor handle *that* question). Each volume is $1.95 in paper, but there are also hardcover editions, so again I suggest you write the publisher for details. One wonders if this particular publishing concept will fly—time will tell.

Recent publications from those associated with this magazine include: *Isaac Asimov Presents the Great SF Stories 22 (1960)* edited by Isaac Asimov and Martin H. Greenberg (DAW, $4.50, paper.)

Books to be considered for review in this column should be submitted to Baird Searles, 1499 boul. de Maisonneuve est., Montreal, PQ, H2L 2B2, CANADA. ●



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Marketplace

ISAAC ASIMOV/ANALOG combination CLASSIFIED AD rate is $6.50 per word—payable in advance—($97.50 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be included in the next issue please send order and remittance to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

GET PAID FOR READING BOOKS! $100 per book. Write: Calco Publishing (Dept. C-107), 500 South Broad, Meriden, CT 06450.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

FREE CATALOGS of Science Fiction pulps, digests, paperbacks, hardcovers. Collections also purchased. Bowman, Box 167, Carmel, IN 46032.

100,000 science fiction and mystery paperbacks, magazines, hardcovers. Free catalogs! Pandora's, Box Z-54, Neche, ND 58265.

In The Future. . . .

YOUR

Classified/Display

AD CAN BE PLACED HERE

For details:

SF CLASSIFIED
380 Lexington Ave.
New York, NY 10017
(212) 856-6338

LOOKING for a publisher? Learn how you can have your book published, promoted, distributed. Send for free booklet. HP-5, Vantage Press, 516 W. 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

CALENDARS

Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine Presents The Art of N.Taylor Blanchard 1992 Calendar

Order this 1992 calendar by sending a check or money order (no cash) to:

Davis Publications
Calendars
380 Lexington Ave.
NY, NY 10168-0035

In the US, please include price of calendar **$9.95** (*NYC residents please add 8¼% sales tax*) plus **$2.75** for shipping and handling for the first calendar, each additional calendar add **$.50**.

In Canada, remit US dollars, include the price of the calendar plus **$4.00** for shipping and handling for the first calendar, each additional calendar **$1.75**.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CATALOGS & DIRECTORIES

IF You Like Dragons, Wizards, and Fairies; send for our catalogue: The Silver Dragon, 5600 Post Road, East Greenwich, RI 02818. Dept. I.

CLOSEOUT MERCHANDISE

FIRST QUALITY CLOSEOUTS! Pants, shirts, socks, blouses, jeans—much more. Sold by the case. For resale only. Price list $1.00. Beal Textiles, Lincolnton, NC 28092.

DRAGON CATALOGS

FANTASTIC variety of decorative, useful, and wearable dragon items. Full-color catalog $2.00. Dancing Dragon - ANO, 5670 West End #4, Arcata, CA 95521.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

WITCHCRAFT Occult Miracle Power Secrets. Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Now accepting students. 1502-AN, Newbern, NC 28563.

INVENTIONS WANTED

PROTECT, PATENT AND DEVELOP, Your Invention rights before sale. Registered Patent Agent and Licensed Professional Engineer. Send for FREE PATENT INFORMATION Every Inventor Should Have. Richard L. Miller, 12 Parkside Drive, Suite-I, Dix Hills, NY 11746-4879. (516) 499-4343.

SONGWRITERS

$1,200.00 CASH PRIZE. Poems Wanted For Songs. Radio-TV Promotions - Recordings - Publishing. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 34278.

POEMS, Songs, Ideas Needed Immediately by Major Recording Companies. Cash Advances on accepted material. $5.00 to cover screening, postage,handling. Allen Productions, 220 West Jersey St./Suite 15, Eliz., NJ 07202.

READ "How To Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes certificate worth $5.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy, send $3.75 (includes postage) to Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

SPECIAL INTERESTS

IF YOUR IQ IS ½ OF ¼ OF ⅒ OF 10,560, READ ON.

If your IQ measures at or above 132*, you're Mensa material. Take our at-home pre-test to see whether you may qualify to join, or let our brochure tell you if you've already qualified. In Mensa, intellectual stimulation is a mathematical certainty.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ Send me the Mensa brochure.

☐ I'll try the at-home pre-test. Enclosed is $12.00 (check or money order in U.S. funds only, please).

mensa
The High IQ Society.

Send to: MENSA, Dept. AN91, 2626 East 14th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11235-3992

*Stanford Binet Test, Form L-M. See brochure for others.

SCIENCE Fiction MUSIC! 18 episodes: Mars, Andromeda, Betelgeuse, more! 90 minute tape! $9.95 plus $2.00 S&H: TLC Co., 12301A NE 33rd Street, Vancouver, WA 98682.

TAPES & CASSETTES

OLDTIME RADIO PROGRAMS. Great Science Fiction! Also, mysteries, comedies, westerns. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR

by Erwin S. Strauss

This is the season for European cons—and of course the WorldCon in Chicago. Plan now for social weekends with your favorite SF authors, editors, artists, and fellow fans. For a longer, later list, an explanation of cons, and a sample of SF folksongs, send me an SASE (addressed, stamped #10 [business] envelope) at Box 3343, Fairfax VA 22038. The hot line is (703) 2SF-DAYS. If a machine answers (with a list of the weekend's cons), leave a message and I'll call back on my nickel. When writing cons, enclose an SASE. For free listings, tell me of your con six months ahead. Look for me at cons behind the Filthy Pierre badge, playing a musical keyboard.

JULY 1991

26–28—**OKon.** For info, write: **Box 4229, Tulsa OK 74159.** Or call **(918) 622-2225** (10 am to 10 pm, not collect). Con will be held in: Tulsa OK (if city omitted, same as in address). Guests include: Jo Clayton, L. Synk, G. A. Effinger, S. & B. Childs-Helton, W. Norwood, M. Musgrave. Camelot Motel.

26–28—**PhroliCon.** Mt. Laurel (NJ) Hilton. Ian Watson. The annual Philadelphia-area relax-a-con.

26–28—**MythCon.** Clarion Hotel, San Diego CA. Cherryh. For fans of high fantasy (Tolkien, etc.).

AUGUST 1991

2–4—**HorrorFest.** Bismarck Hotel, Chicago IL. Joe R. Lansdale, Paul Dale Anderson, E. Gryniewicz.

9–11—**Norway Nat'l. Con, Box 121, Vinderen N-0319, Norway. (47) 2-231 163.** M. Gentle. U. of Oslo.

9–11—**Czechoslovakia Nat'l. Con, % Schuster Martin, Juhoslovanska 5, 040 01 Kosice Czechoslovakia.**

16–18—**VikingCon, Western Wash. U., VU 202 Box V1, Bellingham WA 98225.** Bujold, Dyson.

16–18—**WinCon, 38 Outram Rd., Southsea Hants. PO5 IQZ United Kingdom.** (070) 575-4934. Wolfe.

29–Sep. 2—**ChiCon V, Box A3120, Chicago IL 60690.** WorldCon. Clement, Powers, $150 at the door.

30–Sep. 1—**France Nat'l. Con, % M. Papoz, Casteou Riganaou, Montfort-sur-Argens 83750, France.**

SEPTEMBER 1991

3–9—**Moscow Int'l. Book Fair, 16 ul. Chechova, Moscow 103006, USSR.** For those in the book trade.

6–8—**German Nat'l. Con, Verkehrsamt Berlin/Europa Ctr., Berlin 30 D-1000, Germany (030) 781-9624.**

8–14—**VolgaCon, % B. A. Zavgordny, Poste Restante, Volgograd 400066, USSR. (34) 74-62 or -64**

20–22—**MosCon, Box 8521, Moscow ID 83843. (208) 882-0364.** Relax-a-con at University Inn BW.

20–22—**OutsideCon, BAND HQ, Box 8335, St. Bethlehem TN 37155.** Campout in park nr. Dixon TN.

27–29—**ConTradiction, Box 2043, Newmarket Stn., Niagara Falls NY 14301.** G. A. Effinger, M. Lackey.

27–30—**AlbaCon, % 1155 Pollockshaws Rd. #2/L, Glasgow G41 3NG, Scotland.** Central Hotel.

SEPTEMBER 1992

3–7—**MagiCon, Box 621992, Orlando FL 32862. (407) 859-8421.** '92 World SF Con. $85 to 9/30/91.

SEPTEMBER 1993

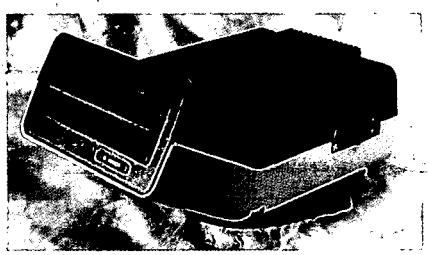
2–6—**ConFrancisco, Box 22097, San Francisco CA 94122. (916) 349-1670.** WorldCon '93. $70 in '91.

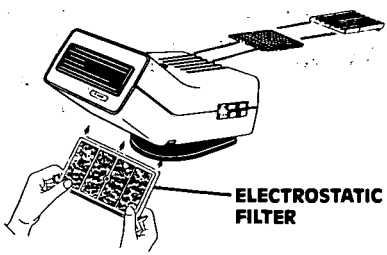
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAIL ★ ORDER ★ MALL

▼ BREATHE EASIER WITH THE AIR PROCESSOR

Clean air is vital to overall good health and general well-being and there is growing concern about the quality of the air around us. Amcor's Air Processor is uniquely designed to remove indoor air pollution and improve air quality. This compact unit has a high voltage generator that produces negatively charged ions that clean the air of cigarette/cigar smoke, dust, pollen, fungal and bacterial particles as well as a host of other allergy stimuli. The Air Processor also features a blower for air circulation and a unique filter that is permanent and washable. Includes a free Ionoscope that detects the negative ions emitted from the ion generator and proves that it is functioning. Very quiet so it is perfect for any room in your house. UL listed. **$99.98** ($6.50) #A2002.





ELECTROSTATIC FILTER

▼ SLEEP SOUNDLY WITH SOUND SLEEPER

Is noise pollution interfering with your ability to get a good night's sleep? If so, then the Sound Sleeper by Audiologic is the clock radio of your dreams. Sound Sleeper combines a state of the art AM/FM cassette clock radio with the benefits of natural sound conditioning. Sound Sleeper lets you fall asleep to the sounds of ocean surf, rushing waterfalls and/or rainfall with the flip of a switch. After a relaxing night's sleep, wake up with a buzzer or music from the radio or cassette. So why have an ordinary clock radio when you can have the cassette clock radio that not only wakes you up but also lulls you to sleep! **$89.98** ($5.50) #A2000.

TO ORDER: Send check with item number for total amounts, plus shipping & handling shown in ( ) payable to **MAIL ORDER MALL** Dept.091, IA; P.O.Box 3006, Lakewood, N.J. 08701, or call TOLL FREE **1-800-722-9999**. NJ residents add 7% sales tax. We honor MasterCard, Visa, and American Express. Sorry, no Canadian, foreign, or C.O.D. orders. Satisfaction Guaranteed. 30 day money back guarantee for exchange or refund. Allow 30 days for delivery.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Magalog Marketing Group Inc. © 1991
1905 Swarthmore Ave., Lakewood, N.J. 08701

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED